

HOMER IN THE SAGEBRUSH

JAMES
STEVENS




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HOMER IN THE SAGEBRUSH

by

JAMES STEVENS

PAUL BUNYAN

BRAWNYMAN

MATTOCK

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JAMES STEVENS



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TO
H. L. DAVIS
WESTERNER AND BARD

CONTENTS

TALES OF THE NORTHWEST COAST

The Dance Hall Fisherman	3
The Bullpuncher	30
The Old Warhorse	57
Ike the Diver's Friend	74
C. P. R.	98

SAGAS OF THE SAGEBRUSHERS

The River-Smeller	117
Jerkline	142
Mr. Stahlberg	165
Dyno Red the Miner	197
The Hardshell Elder	226

IDYLLS OF WESTERN YOUTH

Homer in the Sagebrush	255
The Little Angel	271
Three Bartenders	296

*TALES OF THE
NORTHWEST COAST*

THE DANCE HALL

FISHERMAN

I

THE YANKEE CAPTAIN, Robert Gray, discovered the river, and John Jacob Astor's fur traders founded the town. Fishermen reached the Columbia—Achilles of rivers—in the fifties. The bull-team loggers came in the early eighties. By 1890 Astoria was a booming fishing and lumber port. There were fifty saloons and dance halls.

On Astor Street the sign of the Coach and Horses made British sailors remember the pubs at home and brought them to its bar. On Astor Street two bands played at nightfall and piped the frontier laborers through dance hall doors. Shanghaiing was a flourishing industry in the sailors' boarding houses. Crimps, gamblers and bartenders waxed fat, and the dancing girls wore diamonds. It was rough revelry among the sailors, loggers and fishermen.

On Astor Street the laborer's mean savings purchased him a moment's freedom from twelve-hour labor and bitter living. He had liberty. He was an honored man. Men who wore diamonds shook his hand. Perfumed women smiled up from his arms. It was too much. He had to tear loose and raise hell in sheer joy of escape. Bruised and sick, robbed and wretched he usually was when he returned to forecastle, camp or

fisherman's shack. Yet, Astor Street remained the glamour of his life.

So it was in the life of Accordion Alex. He was an Astoria fisherman in the days of a thousand sails. The Columbia River salmon fishermen now use motor launches instead of sailboats. They have a union. They own automobiles and radios. Prohibition has left Astor Street a row of dismal, deserted shacks. The younger fishermen do not care. They have a fat, contented life; their labor is easy to bear. But there are old fishermen who remember the Astor Street of the saloon days; they remember it with yearning, and they speak of it with more gusto than shame. They remember the surging vital life of frontier labor and its Homeric characters. They tell the story of Accordion Alex.

"He disappeared," they say. "Just disappeared. So many of the old characters went off that way and dropped out of sight. Nobody can tell where they are. Accordion Alex was a character. Everybody who knew the sailing days remembers his accordion playing. He was a little cracked, because he didn't want to play the accordion in a dance hall. He wanted to fish, wanted to battle the old devil of a river. Wouldn't you say he was cracked, now? . . ."

II

THE STEAMER swerved to follow the channel around a long island, and the churning sternwheel dashed spray over the aft rail, where Alex Bergsen stood. He moved forward, closer to the noisy group of salmon fishermen. They were speaking in Norwegian, but they salted it with American words, speech strange to Alex. Ever since the steamboat left Portland he had been trying to get up courage to talk to the fisher-

men. But he was so homesick and he felt such a greenhorn.

The stalwart blond fishermen swaggered over the deck as if they owned both the steamboat and the river. They seemed more like Americans than like people of the old country. They made Alex feel very young and insignificant, in spite of his shoulders like oak knots, his bulky chest and the height at which his tousle of yellow hair waved in the April breeze and shone in the April sunlight. He was sick with a longing for home. The nearer he got to Uncle Eric and his journey's end, the more this longing oppressed him.

There was a girl on the boat who was almost the image of Helga. Only Helga had never looked at him with such bold eyes, and Helga didn't paint her face. The fishermen knew this girl and the dark woman with her. She smiled at the broad remarks that were passed when she and the dark woman walked along the deck. A loose girl, Alex decided contemptuously. But she was slim and blue-eyed. *Jah*, like Helga.

Alex bowed his head over the rail, gazed unseeingly at the foamy wash of water along the steamboat's side and dreamed of a little fishing town on a Norwegian shore. The old country, where he and his kin had made such a lean living, was now a wonderful place in his thoughts, the meagerly rewarded labor there forgotten.

Jah, they were good, the fiords blown over by freezing winds, good, when there was a crackle and a shine from the fireplace on the frosty nights; when there was hot fish on the table; when you could tramp up the mountainside to the three pines. . . . Helga playing with her yellow braids and her blue eyes sending shy glances from their soft corners while his accordion crooned. . . . *Hei!* that was the good life. . . .

He, young Alex Bergsen, might make many dollars here in America, but he would find nothing to make life so pleasant as it was in the old country. He wished the steamboat would reach Astoria soon. He longed for the handclasp of Uncle Eric. Ten years since he had seen Uncle Eric, but Alex had never forgotten the tremendous man with the slow, booming laugh, the hearty voice, and the big fingers that were so lively on the accordion keys.

Alex still had the accordion that Uncle Eric had given the small nephew at the time of leaving Norway to find a fortune in American fishing. Alex had brought the shiny old instrument in his telescope valise. But he hadn't played it any during his journey, for even the sight of it made him sick with yearnings for the evenings at home, sick for the quiet glowing times with Helga, sick for the dancing of summer holidays. And here he was, far away on the great Columbia River of America, here to go salmon fishing with Uncle Eric. Here for gold. *Jah*, for gold.

The fishermen were arguing now about their trade. Alex listened, and he heard for the first time of the pleasures of Astor Street. . . . *Hei!* Astoria, that was the fishing port! The river bar was a devil, and the river was an old devil too in the spring blows. But Astoria, with her fine dance halls and saloons, with every kind of ocean ship any one could imagine rolling over the bar and up the ten miles of estuary to the port, with logging camps and sawmills right at the town, with the great city of Portland just a day's steamboat ride away, with Astor Street crowded with beautiful girls—*jah*, Astoria was the finest place in the world for a fisherman!

III

THE STEAMBOAT glided on from landing to landing. The gentry promenaded with their woman folk. A gang of sawmill men lounged along the rail near Alex. The fishermen had moved on to the bow of the boat. The afternoon drifted away. At last the sun was behind the great trees that towered on the Western hills, and the smooth surface of the river was flushed with red.

A gong sounded, and Alex joined the other passengers in the dining saloon. He made a bottle of beer and a sandwich do for his supper. When he came out on deck again the sun was gone. Between the hills the masses of trees were turning to deep black shadows. As the last thread of color faded out of the sky, the shadows crept from the shore over the river. Small lights glimmered up and down the channel. A wind slashed up so suddenly from the West that it seemed to be snapped from the stroke of a great whip. Alex faced it for a few moments, then he turned to the warm comfort of the passenger saloon.

Most of the men passengers were in the smoking room, where a couple of river gamblers had a poker game flourishing. The air was blue with streamers and puffs of smoke. Alex felt no interest in the poker game, nor in the groups of men who were drinking beer, puffing on pipes, and telling stories with yells of laughter.

Alex took a seat in the saloon near the dark corner where he had left his bundle and telescope valise. He sat in mournful quiet for awhile; then he noticed that the slim girl and the dark woman were seated on the other side of the room. He only glanced at them, but

he was certain that the girl had tried to catch and hold that glance with her bold smile.

He had been a fool to think she might be a good girl like Helga. She was a bold one, a hussy. He could never play the accordion for her as he had played it up in the three pines—so long ago! *Jah*, so long ago . . . *hei!* he was a weak one—a fool—but she was slim and blue-eyed, and maybe she wasn't a loose one, after all.

Certainly she was watching him. Every time he glanced at her he looked into her blue eyes. And every time they seemed to shine with a more caressing light. There was no doubt about it; that girl thought he was a handsome man. Pride glowed in his heart. He'd show her something else now. She'd learn that Alex Bergsen had more to him than good looks. He opened his valise and got out the accordion. His fingers ached for the keys. He yearned to show that slim, blue-eyed girl, but he was a little afraid. This America was a strange country; he might be thrown into jail here for playing an accordion on a steamboat. But maybe, if he played soft and low . . . just so she could hear. . . .

So the Norwegian lad pumped his accordion so gently that it only crooned an old country tune. Then the melody charmed him. His shoulders straightened as he played on, his eyes opened wide and they glowed with pride as he watched his fingers on the keys. Helga had once told him that he had witches in his fingers. A woman notion, but it might be so. He felt other life than his own in them when he played. Now they were driving his homesickness away. And the girl was surprised. He felt like a hero. He would play another tune. Louder! *Hei!* let them throw him in jail! He'd play the bars out of the windows!

She was smiling when the second tune was done.

Alex bravely stared straight at her then, and she still smiled. She was touched, eh? Well! He felt his cheeks grow hot. He played louder and his heart throbbed like his music was making him drunk. His blue eyes shone as they used to shine at Helga in the holiday dances. He shook his cap to the back of his head and strands of thick yellow hair waggled down rakishly above his eyes. His right foot began to thump the floor in time. Another tune. Louder now! *Jah*, she smiles . . . she'll come to the music. . . .

But here are those big lumbering fools of fishermen. They had to come and make great bothersome nuisances of themselves, each one begging for a favorite old country tune. The accordion-player hearkened to them with a grand superior air. They might be veteran fisherman, but they had to bow to the young green-horn now! He felt his size and strength again. He swung to his feet, towering with the tallest of the fishermen. He leaned his back against a post in the center of the cabin. He crashed some chords from the accordion, threw back his head, and sang a Norwegian love song in a roaring tenor. When he finished there was a regular mob around him. Even the gentry were there. The poker games were deserted. And the blue eyes of a slim girl were smiling up from the level of his shoulders. *Hei!* he knew he could bring her around!

"Play some chords, Ole, and I'll give ye a real song!" a mighty voice roared.

"Ole" did not understand, of course. Tina translated for him and he bowed politely, like a hero or a noble. The new singer was a red-bearded lumber-rasser who was the leader of a bunch of sawmill men on their way to Astoria. They called him Crooked Mouth Scotty. He began to roar out the Canadian lumber-jack ballad, "The Island Boys," and the accordion-

player made chords in perfect time and with many frills. Scotty's voice was like thunder and it must have carried to both the Oregon and Washington shores. There was violent applause. He parted his red mustache, cleared his throat and gave the audience a sad sailor ballad. This was applauded so heartily that he hardly stopped to part his mustache and wipe his mouth before he started roaring "The Dashing Young Man on the Flying Trapeze," then "The Bold and the Bad Muldoon," "Joe Hardy," "Belle Brandon" followed, along with other popular songs.

The accordion-player got his share of the cheers. He was warm with pride from his toes to his hair. This was a grand triumph. All of the passengers on the steamboat—the gentry, the fishermen, the loggers, the sawmill men, even some more of the women—were crowded around himself and the red-bearded lumberworker. And the slim girl was at his shoulder. He smiled into her blue eyes as he played, and her blue eyes smiled back at him. He was sure now that she was a good girl. He forgot her bold looks and the paint on her face.

The singing and accordion-playing went on until the steamboat whistle boomed for Astoria. Crooked Mouth Scotty sang these last lines:

"Oh, when I die, don't bury me at all!
Just pickle my bones in alcohol;
Place a bottle of booze at my head and feet;
And let me rest in slumber sweet."

Then he passed his bottle around. The accordion-player downed a big drink. The fishermen passed their bottles around, too. By the time the young greenhorn had his accordion packed again there was fire in his

heart and a wild dance of thoughts in his head. *Hei!* it was wonderful, this America! He would never be homesick again.

"You are a great fellow with the accordion but I'd like to hear you sing some more of the old country love songs." The girl spoke in Norwegian from behind him.

"I'll play and sing some just for you—some time."

"You would say that. But listen. Madam Rosa here would like for you to play in her dance hall. You can make more crowns a week than by fishing." He turned and stared. She smiled, like a bold one again. "I am one of Madam Rosa's girls. I want you to play at our place. They call me Tina. You can call me Tina too."

It was tremendous, this idea of making money just by playing the accordion. But there was something uncomfortable about the thought of it. Anyway he would not be a John-leap-without-looking.

"I go to my uncle," he said. "First I must talk with my uncle."

"Oh, your uncle will tell you a man is a fool to be a salmon fisherman!" said Tina scornfully.

"So?" growled one of the fishermen, having overheard her. "We are fools, eh? It is so. You wenches get our money. *Jah*, we are fools."

"Oh, no, Hans!" Tina tickled the growler under the chin. "I was only joking with our friend—what is your name? Alex Bergsen?—with Accordion Alex. The madam wants him to play in the dance hall. But, Alex, you will come and play for me some time, even if you do go fishing? You will come and dance with me in Astor Street?"

"*Jah*. Sure," said Alex Bergsen, the young greenhorn.

The steamboat drifted slowly into the dark harbor, swinging on a crooked trail among the lights that hung from the dim masts of anchored ships. The fire died out of Alex's blood as the boat docked. He felt a chill about his middle again. Here he was, at the end of the long journey. Here he was, and it was to be a long stay. Norway was far—like a dream. As he crowded with the other passengers his gaze roved through the darkness for a sight of some one who would look like Uncle Eric. *Jah*, there he was, coming for him . . . and Alex felt pretty good again as a huge rough hand gripped his own.

"Good-by, Accordion Alex." Small fingers touched his arm. "I'll look for you on Astor Street."

"So you got acquainted with Tina on the boat," said Uncle Eric. "Watch out, Alex. That kind don't help a fisherman save money."

Alex proudly told the story of his grand triumph.

"*Nei*, playing the accordion on Astor Street is no good for a fisherman. That is for the dance hall girls and their men." The two big Norwegians were striding over a boardwalk now. Eric Bergsen pointed up a plank-paved street as they crossed it. Shouts, music, singing and laughter sounded up and down the street and under the scanty lights groups of men were passing from one place to another. In front of one big house a band was playing and Alex saw girls wearing circus kinds of skirts that no more than covered their knees. "A bad place," said Eric Bergsen. "This Astor Street is called Swilltown by good people. There are better places for fishermen to drink in when the tide turns from the ebb to the flood and we come ashore. Stay away from Astor Street and that Tina, or you will never get back to the old country with a fortune."

Alex said nothing, but he wanted very much to ex-

plore Astor Street. He kept this wish to himself, however, as he made the long walk with his uncle to Upper Town where the Norwegian fishermen lived. He asked questions about fishing for the Royal Chinook. He answered many questions about how he had left everything in the old country. And he answered the questions all over again when he had finished the tremendous supper which Truda Bergsen had cooked for him and he sat with his uncle's family around a big iron heater and sipped hot rum. He answered questions and marveled at the fine furnishings of this home and at the American talk of Pete and Charley, his two young cousins. Fishermen certainly did much better here than in the old country. Alex decided that he would only be a fisherman and forget about playing the accordion in Madam Rosa's dance hall. But Tina's blue eyes were shining boldly at him that night when he went to sleep.

IV

THE NEXT MORNING he and his uncle at once fell to work, getting the fishing gear and the sailboat ready for the salmon run. It was May's first morning and the sun shone in a clear sky. A salty breeze blew in over the river's mouth. It carried, also, a scent of the green timber on the hills. There were docks all along the banks, and nets were spread over the racks. The cottages and stores were built on piling and there was a private boat landing at nearly every one. Everywhere the fishermen were getting ready for the season, which would last from May to September. On and along the cannery wharves in the middle section of Astoria men were at work with nets and on the water. Austrian and Italian fishermen were flocking

into the port from California steamers. Over the hill in Uniontown the Finn fishermen were rigging up their boats and hauling out their nets. And the saloon-keepers, the gamblers and the dancing girls of Astor Street were preparing to gather in their large share of the gold brought by big catches of the Royal Chinook.

Eric Bergsen's boat had been used only two seasons. It was twenty-six feet long and as good a sailer as a broad-beamed boat could be. His two nets were new this season—the net with the small meshes which was used for the small salmon that ran in the first part of the season, and the big net which was used for the great fish of the late summer. The nets were woven from pure flax and they were worth considerable money. Eric Bergsen was captain of the craft and Alex was boat-puller. In the labor and excitement of the first fishing days he forgot Helga and the old country, Tina, also, and the bright dance halls of Astor Street.

When the tide turned from the flood a thousand sails marched out into the river from the Astoria docks. Usually they left in the glow of a low sun, the sails flushed with the red light. A night's catch might be two salmon or two tons. If the fishing was poor the boats would stay out for as long as forty-eight hours. In sunlight or starlight, in wind or fog, it was all the same. Fish through the ebb tide, a hard South wind knocking the boat through splashing whitecaps and sousing it with sheets of rain in the early part of the season, making the boat-puller sweat and strain for hours at the oars. The flaxen meshes of the net combing a course down the great river, catching the small May salmon by the gills, catching driftwood and other river débris also. On the upper river and in the harbor waters the river boats were a great danger in darkness and fog. They would boom out of thick black

or gray shadows and churn into the fishing fleet, smashing boats often enough, the paddle wheels ripping nets into rags, leaving turned-over boats in their wakes and men loaded with oilskins and hip boots struggling in fog—or night-blanketed water. Alex Bergsen was to know the terror of this experience before his fishing days were over:

And there were the thundering breakers of the bar. There were no big boats in the estuary, except tugs and the ships that were making or leaving port. But in his first month of fishing Alex and his uncle had a shivery escape from the mighty rollers. They had fished down an ebb tide in a fog that was so thick a man could cut chunks out of it with an oar, as Eric Bergsen complained. But the catch was not so bad and they fished on, waiting for the flood. All of a sudden the fog thinned out and a fearful mournful roar sounded ahead. The wet sail began to smack as a hard wind struck it. In a second the fishing boat was out in clear sunlight. Behind the fishermen was a wall of fog that appeared to reach to the sky. Ahead sunlight shimmered on the rollers that heaved over the bar of the great river.

Eric hauled in the net and Alex put the boat about and fought the tide desperately with the oars. With the help of the wind he held his own until the tide turned. Then he keeled over on the salmon and panted and wheezed until he had got his wind again and the blood had quit pounding at the back of his eyeballs. He took the oars back from his uncle and pulled the boat on to Astoria through the fog.

As the two drank hot rum at Larsen's bar Alex could not help swaggering and bragging a little. He was a fisherman and the son of a fisherman, a tough, hard strapper of a man who could lord it through wind,

fog and wild water. *Jah*, he had been a great fool to ever think of being a woman's man. A music-maker in a dance hall! *Hei!* this was a man's life, the life Alex Bergsen was made for, he exulted to himself, as the hot drink flushed over him. The wet black oilskin glistened on mighty shoulders. In the hip boots his legs were like two tough timbers. His arms ached, but they had beaten the wind and tide. And the catch was large. *Hei!* for a fisherman's life!

Eric Bergsen said nothing about the adventure. He hadn't liked it. Such danger was miserable to go through. But it was part of the day's work. A fisherman must never be surprised if he finds himself helplessly drowning. And he must think of nothing but the catch.

One evening the fleet put out from the wharves in a hard May blow. Eric's boat was beating along at a good clip, the whitecaps splashing him and Alex at every lusty puff of wind. Alex saw a boat overturn behind them. "Leave them go," ordered Eric. "They are Italians. Their countrymen can pick them up."

The boat sailed on, stopping for nothing until the salmon catch of this ebb tide was made.

V

BY JUNE Alex was thinking nothing and feeling nothing but the grinding labor of the fishing season. It wore a man down to skin and bone, this business. So many times he worked forty-eight hours on the river to make one good catch. Seven days a week of it. The salmon never stopped for holidays or sleep. They were strange and wonderful fish, these salmon. When they started from the open sea for the spawning ground where they themselves had been hatched, nothing but nets could

stop them. On up the great river. On through the falls and cascades, fighting the rapids, bruising themselves against the rocks, never feeding, always rushing on, on into the mountain rivers, into creeks, their flesh vanishing, their gills turning white, on to the grounds where they would spawn and die. A hero of a fish, and a rich one to eat when it came fresh from the salt sea water.

The salmon rested not and neither did the fishermen rest, except to snatch a little sleep. To Alex Bergsen the old country—his people, Helga, the fiords, the snowy and cloudy mountains—became more and more like a dream. He had forgotten the blue eyes of Tina, the dance hall girl. Eric kept him away from Astor Street. No tunes sounded from his accordion. Alex could hardly spare a waking moment for anything but the salmon catch. Like the other fishermen he drank something before he went out and when he came back. Often Eric took a bottle along. A nip of something strong and hot made a man feel better in the wind and fog. When he rolled into his bed Alex was like a dead man until Aunt Truda shook him awake.

The big salmon joined the run. Fishermen boasted of netting sixty-pounders. Now there was the weather of warm summer days and moonlit nights. Fishing was still hard labor in such fair weather, but it was more like sport. The harbor and the port were beautiful to see then from the fishing course. The wharves and the business streets seemed to snuggle against Coxcomb Hill, which towered six hundred feet above the river front. The gentry had fine homes among the cedars and big firs on that hill. And a man could enjoy the sight of the white river steamboats sweeping across the eight miles of river from the Washington bluffs. Many sailing vessels were towed over the bar and at

times there was a little forest of masts above the wharves. Smoke from sawmill and cannery stacks waved away in lazy clouds that appeared very handsome against the blue sky. On a clear summer morning it was a fine sight when the thousand boats drifted over the water from the bar, the rising sun making a red dazzle of their sails. At this part of the season a young fisherman could not feel so heroic, but he could be proud of the big catches that were making him a wealthy man.

At the end of the salmon run in the last of August Alex Bergsen had seven hundred dollars clear as his share of the season's catch. It was a lot of money for any workingman at that time and it made the young Norwegian feel as wealthy as a noble. But he was tired. *Jah*, so tired. He was gaunt and worn. For a week he did little but eat and sleep. At the end of his rest a stronger hunger took hold of him. He yearned again for the slim girl, Tina, and the pleasures of Astor Street. Surely he could have a little fun now, with such a store of wealth. He hadn't stopped fishing like so many others to go on sprees, he told his uncle. Why not a little fun, now?

"You watch yourself, Alex," said Eric solemnly. "It is eight months to the next season. You had better do like the other smart fishermen. Buy some land, build yourself a house. You keep away from Swilltown, Alex. There your money will go like minnows through the net. Build a house and write about America to your Helga."

Alex did scrawl a letter to Helga. He told her he had become rich in one summer in America. He was going to stay in the wonderful country. And he was going to build a house. *Jah*, a fine house. It would have three rooms. There would be two stoves. And

fine furniture. A big bed fit for a king and a queen. What do you think of that, Helga?

But there were many lots for sale and before Alex could decide on one he had strayed to Astor Street. He got down there one night with three young fishermen who could talk American. They told a bartender they were "out for gude time an' raise hal." The bartender was sympathetic and treated. Each of the four fishermen then bought a round of redeye. After that Alex could not resist the music that sounded from Madam Rosa's dance hall.

VI

"AT LAST here is Accordion Alex!" cried Tina, as soon as he had entered the door. She left her partner and danced up to him. Alex frowned at her short skirts and at the paint on her face. He no longer imagined that she might be a good girl, but he was still charmed by the yellow waves of her hair and the warm light that swam out to him from her blue eyes. "Do you hear the accordions?" she laughed. "You can play so much better. Let's see how you dance, Alex. Come. An old country dance."

Alex looked awkward in his store clothes, but when he swung Tina among the dancers his strength and suppleness made her forget his ugly coat and pants. His long blond hair waved and shone. He had the clear, straight-looking blue eyes of a young Norwegian, the pink cheeks, the strong white teeth, the good-natured grin. His big shoulders waved with the motions of his lean, limber body. His feet seemed to hardly touch the floor as he romped through the dance.

"How strong he is!" panted Tina, when the dance was done. "You will dance with me all night, Alex?"

"*Jah*. Sure," he grinned.

But there were so many drinks that his friends had to help him home before the night was ended. Alex felt pretty sick when he got up at noon and he was mightily relieved when neither his uncle nor aunt scolded him. They had expected it. Most of the young unmarried fishermen wasted their money on Astor Street. Well, it was a hard life, and a lusty young fellow could not sit and suck his thumb like a baby. If he had really wanted Helga he might have built a house.

Alex still insisted to himself that he wanted Helga. She was a good girl and would make a good wife. This other—*hei!* she was a bad one! But what delight there was in her! And Astor Street, well, they could call it Swilltown, but it had laughter, music and light, shining bars and glittering mirrors, jolly people; and down there men who wore diamonds would treat you like a friend. Alex had a feeling for more than just a riot of drinking. Astor Street made dreams come true. And a fisherman never knew if he would last through another season. Down in the river bottom, with fish gnawing your eyes—what were savings then? *Hei!* for Astor Street!

By Christmas little was left of Alex's seven hundred dollars. The other young fishermen who had blown their money had to run up bills at the stores and boarding houses to live. There was little other work to be had. Besides, a real fisherman despised other kinds of work. But Alex Bergsen could play the accordion. And Tina wanted him. So he began playing in Madam Rosa's dance hall. His playing and singing were soon famous among the Finns and Norwegians of the port. They all praised it, but Alex felt that they didn't look on him as a man like themselves any more. Uncle Eric hardly spoke to him now. If it hadn't been for

Tina he would have quit the dance hall in a minute and gone into debt for his living, like the other young fishermen.

Then Alex got a letter from Helga. It was a surprise to find so many words of love in it. He had forgotten, almost, that they had ever been in love. She said she was wild with delight about the house; she wrote as though she expected him to send for her next spring and put her in the fine new house as his wife. What a scrape you can get into, thought Alex, just by writing a letter! Yet it seemed like the best thing that could have happened, had he bought a lot, built a house, and sent for Helga to be his wife. He had been a devil of a fool. This Tina had made him crazy. She had made him half-promise not to go fishing any more. Well! A fisherman was a man. An accordion-player was a woman-thing. From now on he would be a fisherman, nothing else. Next fall he would build a house for Helga. She was a good girl who didn't wear paint on her face.

That night Alex got very drunk before he went to Madam Rosa's dance hall. Redeye, instead of weakening his resolution to be just a fisherman from now on, strengthened it. He preached a sermon to an astonished Tina. At the end of it Alex solemnly advised her to wipe the paint off her face and quit the loose life of a dance hall girl. Tina's blue eyes turned steely. She slapped him, then raked his cheek with her nails. It happened that Crooked Mouth Scotty and a gang of lumber-rasslers were in the dance hall, all of them drunk enough to be spoiling for a fight. Scotty saw the quarrel between Alex and Tina and he pushed through the dancers to take her part.

A smash behind the right ear knocked Alex over a table. He straightened up with a bellow of rage that

was the signal for a knock-down-and-drag-out fight to start between the fishermen and the lumber-rasslers. Scotty's fist hit Alex on the chin like a hammer. He pitched backward from the blow, the back of his neck hitting the floor first. Crooked Mouth Scotty dropped on top of him, felled by Tina, who had broken a full bottle of beer over his head. Blood from Scotty's cut scalp streamed into Alex's eyes. He heard Scandinavian and American oaths roaring, glass smashing, and the squeals of the dance hall girls. He rolled Scotty away and tried to get to his feet. He saw a couple of gamblers throw themselves belly-down on the floor and wrap their arms around their faces. Two British sailors staggered through the door and stared drunkenly at the row. A fisherman floored one and a lumber-rassler kicked another off his feet. The lights were knocked out. The battlers rioted into the street, Alex staggering dizzily with the rest. Somehow the fight ended, the sawmill hands and fishermen straggling into other dance halls and saloons, where they inspected black eyes and cut lips and laughed and argued over the battle. But Alex started for home. Tina ran after him.

"Oh, Alex, don't go!" she cried. "I'm sorry I scratched you. Come back and be friends again, Alex!"

"Go back to your woodsman," he growled, not knowing she had fought for him against Crooked Mouth Scotty. "I have been a devil of a fool about you. You are a bad one. I have a good girl in the old country."

He pushed her away and dragged himself on home. He felt very sick of Astor Street. But he was back there again in a week. Every other place was so dull in the rainy winter weather. It was hard to only loaf around and listen to talk about fishing. Astor Street

had dreams for a man. But now Tina was gone. Where, Madam Rosa didn't know. Maybe to San Francisco. Maybe just to Portland. He didn't care, Alex told himself. He would be a sober man from now on. At the end of the next season he would build a house and send for Helga. *Jah*, he would do better this year. He would become a real salmon fisherman, have his own house and his own boat and fishing gear.

They were dreary days until the river came to life in another May. Then the battle with wind, fog and tide claimed everything. For another four months Alex gave the labor of fishing all that he had. But he drank more this season between catches. It seemed like he had to. It was a nightmare out there on the river in the windy and foggy nights. The life ground more out of Alex than it did from a block of a man like Uncle Eric. Something in him battled against it. Something made him dream, and the river was a devil in his dreams. But he fought that devil with all his might. *Hei!* he was a man!

It was a bitter fight—and there was always Astor Street. And Astor Street caught Alex again at the end of the season in its shining net. He was a fisherman in debt when another May shone. . . . The story repeated itself. . . .

"Ay, he's a wild one, that Alex," his uncle would say, shaking his head.

But there was some pride in his eyes. Alex had proved himself a man. He had stuck to the fishing. He was a fisherman, and not an accordion-player in a dance hall. He didn't go off longshoring or working in the woods and sawmills. He was a man of one trade, a man who helped to make up the life that sent a thousand sails out from the port in the season—and he helped to make the glaring, roaring life of Astor Street

as a fisherman, not as a clown. He was a good Bergsen.

Helga's letters came no more after Alex's fifth season on the Columbia. His mother wrote that the girl had married. The news came at the end of the season and Alex blew his salmon money in a one-month's spree that became one of Astor Street's great stories.

Eric Bergsen said nothing to Alex. He told his wife not to worry, that the wild young fisherman was a Bergsen and would settle down some time. He was a good boat-puller. Let him go as he listed until the oldest boy was big enough to take his place. There was time enough for Alex to settle down and buy his own boat and fishing gear.

VII

ERIC BERGSEN couldn't be shaken by anything. When Alex had his terrible accident at the start of the new season his uncle only philosophized about it. *Jah*, it was dangerous, this life of fishing on the great river. He himself didn't fear, for he kept sober and knew how to take care of himself in the worst weather. Alex had been drunk that day, or such a little bump wouldn't have thrown him out of the boat. *Jah*, the steamer had jumped out of the fog all of a sudden, but it hadn't bumped them so hard. If Alex hadn't stood up and shook his oar when the steamboat jumped out of the fog, screaming and swearing like a madman about a river devil—*jah*, he was crazy-drunk, had been raising hell on Astor Street when he should have been getting sleep. So the little bump pitched him over the side. The paddle wheel smashed his leg. The doctor had to cut it off above the knee. With only one leg a fisherman was no good. A half of a man. *Jah*, he and Truda would have to take care of Alex.

Alex was in bed for many weeks. It wasn't only the throbbing stump of a leg that made him suffer so much. He was beaten. The river had whipped him, made him half a man. He could never go out with the salmon fleet again. He was no good any more. Good for nothing but dreams. Alex would twist his head and look at the sweep of a broad shoulder and a thick arm until his eyes burned. Drawing a deep breath, he would watch the bulk of his chest lift. Alex would feel a tight ache in his throat then. The river had whipped him. He was no good. Good for nothing but dreams. No better than a hunchback. Half a man.

While he was learning to hobble around on a wooden leg, Alex brought out the old accordion. He sat in a rocking chair, shut his eyes and made it croon many tunes. Strange, thought Aunt Truda, so few of them are old country tunes. Most of them were new to her. Alex had learned them in the dance halls. Well, he was not thinking of the old country as he played. Shutting his eyes and playing the accordion, he could drive off the nightmare of the river devil. He saw himself in the dance hall, a swaggering young fisherman, flush with the money from a tremendous catch; *jah*, there he was, a broad-beamed, yellow-headed giant in oilskins, with legs as solid as two timbers, in shiny hip boots. There wasn't a better fisherman on the river than that young Alex Bergsen at Madam Rosa's bar. The dance hall girls were all crazy about him, especially one with clear blue eyes and wavy yellow hair. *Jah*, Tina was certainly there. She didn't want him to be an accordion-player any more. He was her big fisherman. They waltzed. How lightly he waltzed, even in heavy boots! *Hei!* here was the best pair of legs, the lightest feet on the river! Tina's eyes were misty with love. . . .

"Is he losing his mind?" said Aunt Truda to Eric. "He plays waltzes the whole day long."

"I think he is practicing to play in the dance halls," said Eric.

That was the logic of it. By the end of the winter Alex Bergsen, fisherman, was forgotten. But Accordion Alex was known to everybody in the port.

Sailors off the ocean ships, steamboat men, loggers from the bullteam camps, clam-diggers, sail-makers, boat-builders, sawmill hands, and the thousands of fishermen in the port—all came to Madam Rosa's place at some time or other to hear Accordion Alex play. There were three others, making an accordion band. And there was a drummer. But when Accordion Alex shut his eyes and played—that was the music. Sometimes he would sing. Then the dancing would stop. And the dancing girls and the workingmen would try to make him drink more, for he would sing only when he was drunk.

Accordion Alex was a famous man, but when he looked on the dancing crowd with sober eyes he was sad. *Nei*, it was not a man's life, this. They were men out there in the crowd with the dancing girls, many of them in their work clothes. They were here for a few hours of freedom, here for a short escape from the grind of labor. But that labor was their real life—on ship, in the timber, or on the river. The crowd changed every night. Most of the time the men were at work, as men should be. They were lean about the middle and you could see that their arms were hard. His own arms were getting flabby and his body was fat and soft. He was an accordion-player, a woman's man. Well, it couldn't be helped. When you were half a man you had to live like one. Anybody could see that. It made you sad, even when you were playing your live-

liest and the crowd was yelling cheers at you. So you would drink until you got a hot glow in your head. Then you could shut your eyes and dream as you played. Dream you were such a lusty and handsome young fisherman that any girl must love you madly. Such a man would sing with fire in his voice. And so Accordion Alex sang to Madam Rosa's crowd. Some nights the dream was cold and dim and Accordion Alex would drink too much. He would have to be helped to his room—he stayed with his uncle no longer—, for a peg-legged man falls down easily when he is drunk. Usually he would fight with the ones who tried to help him, growling in Norwegian that he could get to bed by himself even if he was half a man.

VIII

IN SPITE OF his heavy drinking, Accordion Alex lasted for three seasons in Madam Rosa's dance hall. In time he lost much of his magic. When he shut his eyes and dreamed, things blurred up in a devilish mixture. The dance hall floor would change to fog-blanketed water, the mighty young fisherman was shaking his fist at a squat snorting devil that beat him down, smothered him, whipped him. *Jah*, the river had taken the man. But Accordion Alex played on. He could play the accordion in his sleep. Often he thought of Helga now and he remembered how she used to talk of the witches in his fingers. Helga and his young life. So far away. Far away forever. . . . Often now Tina was confused in his mind with the young girl Helga. He saw a girl in the old country long-skirted dress, a girl with braids and clean cheeks. But she was Tina. He stood in front of her and fought back a mob. He was always fighting now, in the blur of his dreams. Labor was a battle. So

was love. He had been beaten by a woman and by the river. He told the fishermen they should be proud, for they hadn't been whipped yet. They laughed and told him he was cracked and to quit talking and sing them a song.

"*Jah*. Sure."

He sang well as long as he saw the girl in Helga's dress among the blur of faces and light. But he could not hold the fancy. He was a crippled clown, paid to amuse drinking laborers. The singing and playing were work, miserable work that he must do because he was only half a man. There was no hope for him, if he could not dream . . . but the next night the dream would return and he would see Tina in the crowd . . . with Alex Bergsen, the young fisherman, by her side.

It all ended the night that Tina herself returned. Accordion Alex saw her, not in the dress of a Helga, not innocent and young, but as she was, changed as he himself had changed. She was on the arm of a Portland saloon-keeper. The man was fat. He sported a glossy black mustache and a big diamond sparkled in his neck-tie. Tina was dressed in rich silks. She was as slim as ever and her yellow hair was still wavy and thick. Her eyes smiled as they had always smiled. She and the saloon-keeper had a drink and a little talk with Madam Rosa. Then Tina came over and greeted Accordion Alex. She spoke very pleasantly. She had heard about his success as an accordion-player. He was famous as far as Portland. She was kind in her talk, but superior. Wouldn't he play something for her? *Jah*, sure. Tina and her saloon-keeper danced one dance. Then Tina shook hands with Accordion Alex and said she hoped to hear him again some time. He kept his eyes shut as long as he heard her silks rustling toward the door.

IX

ACCORDION ALEX didn't drink or play any more that night. He was as sober as a judge when he hobbled up to bed. There he lay, wide-eyed, trying to dream, trying to hope, trying to think. But he was empty of all hopes and dreams, and no thought would come to him; nor any feeling, either, except an ache that was a shadow of the pain he had felt in his heart when he realized the river had beaten him. . . .

He must get out, he thought at last. He must go, it didn't matter where. . . . "*Jah*, sure, I must go," he said. . . . His eyes closed, but in a torpor rather than sleep. A flame had gone out. A dream had died. And now there was nothing. He was a shell, a burned-out lamp. Nothing left . . . but the living of years. . . .

"Yep, he just dropped out of sight," say the old fishermen.

THE BULLPUNCHER

I

A THOUSAND miles of timberland. Cedar and spruce, hemlock and Douglas fir. The forest sweeps down from Alaska, fringes the Fraser River, skirts Puget Sound, makes a great green ruff for Mt. Tacoma, blankets the Olympic Peninsula for millions of acres, walls Gray's and Willapa Harbors, hedges the Columbia, and rolls on over the Oregon valleys and hills to meet the sequoias of California. This is the timber country of the Pacific Northwest. It is the last American wilderness. Here Paul Bunyan died.

Here the Herculean hero of the loggers lived the last of his glory among his choppers, sawyers and bull-punchers from Michigan, Wisconsin and the State of Maine. Paul Bunyan and his glory did not fade into the dark of far timber until the machine made the logger a timber mechanic, until the strapping Northwestern sisters of the Lake States river towns took the veil and became "lumber capitals."

In the bullpunching days Paul Bunyan survived in tremendous tales. Then there were also mortal heroes in the land. One Black Larrity was an Achilles of the Gray's Harbor logging towns; in his highest renown he was known as the bulliest performer that ever splintered the plank streets of Aberdeen with calks. The fame of Black Larrity vanished with that of Paul

Bunyan at the end of the nineties. What became of old Paul and Black Larrity? Nobody knows. Your great characters must disappear, if they are to be greatly remembered.

The old-timers say that Black Larrity left the Gray's Harbor country when the first whistle of a donkey engine was heard along the Wishkah River. The saloons of Aberdeen were clean, decent and tame by that time. A performer like Black Larrity couldn't go through a blow-in without landing in jail. So he went over the hump. Where he ended, the old-timers do not know. They tell of his first Christmas blow-in in Aberdeen, of his battle with Swede Henry, that tough bull of the woods, and they say:

"He disappeared. Most of the famous old characters disappeared. Just like that."

II

A WIND roared up the Wishkah from the foggy harbor and the great boughs of virgin cedars, hemlocks and Douglas firs dripped from a cold December drizzle. The sixteen oxen—the "bullteam"—stood with drooping heads, the log chain hanging slack under the eight yokes. Black Larrity, the bullpuncher, and his second man were heaving the turn of logs together by the power of jackscrews. The skids, small logs sunk in the earth in intervals of four feet, were smeared with oil and the riding side of the log turn was peeled and slick. But it was always tough going around this bend of the skidroad and the shod hoofs of the big bulls slipped in the soaked earth between the skid logs. The turn was struck, and Black Larrity, being in a fair humor, was giving his bulls the best of it by jack-

ing the logs together, slacking the coupling chains, just as a locomotive engineer jams the cars of his train together for an easy start.

It was a ten-minute job for the bullpuncher and his second. Then Black Larrity shoved a brown plug under his sweeping, coaly mustache, ground off a chew that bulged his right cheek—the cheek that had a gashlike scar running over it from high bone down to chin—, stuck the plug in a pocket of his black-and-red-checked mackinaw, and picked up his goad.

The goad was a thick oak stick over six feet long and tipped with iron. By itself the goad was a club but in Larrity's gloved hand it looked like a switch. He held it straight up while he scowled and figured over the bullteam and the turn of logs. His sweep of mustache, the deep scar, the thick, fishhook eyebrows, the heavy muss of black hair over his forehead, made the scowl a tremendous one. Larrity fired a stream of tobacco juice that hit the butt log squarely in the heart, then he swung springly for the bullteam.

"Yee-ay, bulls!" His growly bellow brought a slow shiver from the low-headed bulls. "Yee-ay, Buster—Tramper—Li-on! Yee-ay, you juggy dead-eyed, hump-backed critters of the old hell! H'ist, Tramper, or I'll chew your hocks off! Snub—Hogan—Sawbuck—Hols—you leaders! Heave on 'er or I'll burn and blast ye from muzzle to tail! H'ist! Yee-ay, bulls!"

At each bellow Black Larrity sprang from yoke to yoke, the sharp iron tip of the goad raking the ribs of the bulls and gouging their shoulders. The wheelers lumbered against their yoke, the swingers tightened the chain, the leaders heaved. The eyes of every aroused animal rolled as the team took the butt-log ahead with a heavy lunge. The second log of the turn slowed them a little, the third one made them labor—

and again Black Larrity's profane roars and the bite of his goad made them paw mud.

"There she skids! Gee, Hols!"

The bullteam now had a start that should have taken the turn of logs on around the bend. But a squeal of brake shoes on iron tires made Black Larrity glance through the bush. The road to a new settlement ran close to the skidroad here. Through the bush he saw two shaggy horses braced back in mangy breeching to keep a lumber wagon from running over them on a sharp pitch of the road. An old woman in a floppy felt hat and a man's rusty overcoat was driving the team from a spring seat. Beside her was a girl in a yellow slicker. A pale oval face shone through the gray mist. Wide blue eyes gazed into Larrity's black ones. What in the holy old mackinawed devils—she seemed to be scared! Her lips were parted like she was going to scream. And damn' if she wasn't holding her hands over her ears! It was just a glimpse through the bush—then only the green boughs dripping from the heavy mist—and the bulls were slowing down. Tramper, the near wheeler, grunted, stopped, and sank to the ground.

For a few seconds Black Larrity stared dumbly at the stalled bullteam. She'd heard him giving the bulls old Billy-hell. That's why she'd looked scared and put her hands over her ears. Scared of him, was she? Well, she'd better be scared, if she belonged to this lousy sanctimonious gang of settlers that had begun stump-ranching along the Wishkah. If that outfit tangled up with him a few deacons would get their ribs broke. As for the women folks—what in the name of the slippery old saints did church women want to come into this wild timber country for? Here one had to come along and hear him giving it to the bulls in the only language

bulls could understand. She had looked at him like a rabbit looks at a wolf. And he'd let the log turn stall again. Tramper was down. By the holy old, jumping old, whistling old, high-tailed, bald-headed, blue-bellied Jerusalem H. Slim!

"H'ist! H'ist, you, Tramper!"

The scar in Black Larrity's right cheek was scarlet and his whole face was an Indian red. He h'isted Tramper with his goad, then he leaped to the butt log. It was five feet thick, on a level with the wide hips of the wheelers. Black Larrity jumped on those hips. His right calked boot struck Buster's back, his left one struck a white spot on Tramper's ribs. Using the goad for a balance, Black Larrity leaped high and came down with raking kicks on the backs of the plunging beasts. Little streams of blood oozed over Tramper's white spot. Buster bawled like he was being butchered. Larrity leaped on to the next yoke, raked and kicked—on to the next—on to the leaders—and to the ground.

"Yee-ay, bulls!"

The bullteam heaved against their yokes like stampeding cattle. The log turn plunged over the skids and around the bend. As Black Larrity took it on down to the river landing he muttered and swore to himself about Christian women.

Swede Henry, the bull of the woods, was at the landing.

"What the hal you ban blood 'em up foor?" he grumbled.

"Who's punchin' these bulls?" said Larrity coldly.

"Ay tank maybe you don' punch 'em after Christmas."

"That's what you 'tank,' hey? Maybe this outfit'll

have another boss logger after Christmas. Y'ever 'tank' of that, Swede Henry?"

"Ay gas we settle that plenty soon enough."

Swede Henry bristled his pale bushy eyebrows in a threatening frown and squinted his small gray eyes in a hostile stare. Swede Henry was not afraid of any black Irishman or a bullpuncher alive. Yellow hair jutted out from under his cap like wheat stubble. His nose was flat and his face was pitted with calk scars. He was a Wisconsin man. It had taken a dozen lumberjacks to put those scars on his face. A river town king he had always been in Wisconsin and no Gray's Harbor logger had yet rassled him down. He was not afraid of Black Larrity. After Christmas he would still be the boss logger of this Wishkah camp and there would be a new bullpuncher on the skidroad.

Larrity paid no more attention to the bull of the woods. As he turned the bulls back up the skidroad he was scowling over his own dark thoughts. A girl had looked at him like a rabbit looks at a wolf. That was about it. A religious girl and a lousy timber beast. The bullteam lumbered up the skidroad with a slow jangle of chains. Yeah, that's what he was, what he always had been, boy and man. That was what you had to be to punch the bulls and to hold your own in the timber town saloons. He might go join the settlers, get their religion—Campbellites, wasn't they?—and go stump-ranching. A religious girl would smile at a religious man. But he was a lousy timber beast, heart, soul and hide. The bulls were to punch. Swede Henry was to be licked. He'd never had a blow-in in Aberdeen yet, as he'd come to this country since the Fourth of July. The Christmas blow-in was just ahead; in it he'd have to show what a star performer he was, take

Swede Henry to his cleaning—so what the hell, Bill, what the hell!

Swede Henry stood with his hairy red fists resting on his hips until the bullteam had vanished around the bend and into the drizzle and mist. The bull of the woods grunted and turned to meet the curious gaze of the boom boss.

"You better look out for Black Larrity," said the boom boss earnestly. "He's a bad one and he don't like Swedes."

"Ay give a gude damn," growled Swede Henry.

"I allow you can handle him," said the boom boss politely. "But he'd be a bad un to meet in a dark alley. Slab Gilkerson used to know him on the Menominee. He'd punched bulls in Maine, but in Michigan he was a star sleigh teamster and a white water bucko. Tough black Irish all the time. They was a Swede bartender in one of the river towns. He had corkscrew mustaches that was bigger'n Larrity's coaly ones. When Larrity first saw them he bellered, 'Chop 'em off!' 'Go to hal!' says the Swede. Larrity overs the bar and beats him rumdum. 'Have 'em chopped when I get back from the spring drive,' he ordered when he left. Sure enough, end of the drive, here come Larrity into the saloon. The Swede still has his mustaches. Larrity overs the bar for him again. The Swede has a hatchet stashed and he out and ups with it and puts that gash in Larrity's map. Cut him up otherwise too. But Larrity leaves him a dead Swede. Had to take out from the Michigan timber country, though. Headed for Minnesota or sommers, then for Washington and the big sticks of the Olympic Peninsula. And here he is. Look out for his Christmas presents, Swede Henry."

"Ay give a gude damn," repeated the bull of the

woods. "Well, we got to be loggin' noo. Yump back to your boom sticks."

III

THAT NIGHT the wind roared into a storm that beat from the open sea over the Gray's Harbor bar and up the Wishkah. It rattled the shakes that roofed the bunk shanty and it puffed and whistled through the cracks between the rough boards of the walls.

"Might as well be bunkin' inside a picket fence," grumbled an old faller, as he tramped in from supper and lit his pipe.

The remark was spoken to Larrity but the bullpuncher paid it no mind. The mist and drizzle had turned into rain before dark. His mackinaw was wet and it was hanging on a line above the pot-bellied heater. The fire snapped and snarled around pitchy knots and the fat sides of the heater bloomed red. The mackinaw hung to dry, Larrity sat on a bench and gnawed a mouthful off his plug. He pulled off his calk boots and threw them over to his bunk. Then he sat with his sock feet perched on the edge of the two by six frame which enclosed the ash-filled heater bed. They were big feet but the sweat-stained toes of the gray wool socks curled out and drooped down. Larrity kept the toes elevated above the ashes, which were brown with tobacco juice. He spread his knees apart, rested his forearms on them, and let his hairy hands dangle between his legs. He scowled solemnly at the three triangle holes in the door of the heater through which the flames flickered and snapped. Every so often he spit a brown stream at one of these holes. There was always a sharp hiss for a second, as Larrity never missed. After each discharge Larrity would lift

a hand, part his mustache, and wipe his mouth. Then he would start scowling and thinking again.

The shakes overhead rattled from the rain and the wind. The loggers crowded the benches around the stove. They were all in their sock feet. All of them were wearing overalls or ducking pants staggered just below the knee. Red strips of drawers legs were revealed between pants ends and sock tops. Heavy suspenders stretched over backs covered with wool shirts, red, green or blue. There were several bald heads, but every man had mustaches. There were no cigarettes. Pipe smoke of a stinging smell curled over the bowed heads of the loggers, who were tired out from their eleven hours in the wet cold. Fresh tobacco juice soon made small puddles in the ashes of the heater bed. From rafters, beams and lines hung wet mackinaws, staggered shirts, paraffin pants, and underclothes which had been boiled to kill the latest crop of lice. The windows were shut tight and the steam from the drying clothes mixed its powerful various smells with that of bitter root tobacco burning in caked pipes. The coal oil lamps with rusty tin reflectors behind them smoked from shelves in each end of the bunkhouse. The light was so dim around the heater that its red sides shone and sparkled. A mumble of talk arose. Somebody was grouching about the cook.

"That belly burglar's so greasy he has to use sandpaper to pick up the dishes."

An old faller complained of his rheumatism.

"It was better for a while here on the Coast. Never bothered me at first like she used to in Michigan. But now it's misery all the time."

A swamper had a lame ankle.

"Widder-maker dropped from a snag. Come nigh gettin' me. But I dodged. Turnt so quick, though, I

spraint my lousy ankle. Warn't so close to Christmas, I'd mope."

Christmas. . . . The mumble of talk turned to the good time to come. . . .

"Hope I meet up with that woman in the Eagle I had last Fourth."

"Not me. Three drinks a day this trip is my limit. Got to save up for my old age."

"Yeah, you'll save, lad. You'll get the other ear chewed off this blow-in, that's how you'll save."

"Hear they's a new place opened where they sell the real double-stamp."

"Yeah. Paul Bunyan's runnin' it, ain't he? Redeye, rotgut, bug juice and forty-rod—that's the licker for loggers all the time. Double-stamp stuff for loggers? Don't tell me!"

"I learnt last Fourth how they mix their bar licker. First they take hundred eighty-eight proof alcohol, then English breakfast tea for color, then prune juice for flavor—"

"You mean finecut for both color and flavor, don't you, lad? That was it back in the river towns."

"I'll bust the faro bank this trip, then I'll buy a bullteam of my own."

"You'll buy a trip to hell ridin' out on the ebb tide if you don't steer clear of the tinhorn joints, old settler! The bustin'll be done by somebody with a blackjack and you'll join the floater fleet!"

"Hear they got a new bar in the Heron Cribs. Built like a horseshoe. Some nights they gets one of the sportin' women out, strip her off, grease her with vaseline, put her and some cockeyed bum inside the bar, and then have a chase for your whiskers."

"Yeah? That makes me think of the time I went from Saginaw to Chicago. . . ."

Larrity's scowl grew deeper and darker as the talk went on and the loggers began to boast and brag about their great drunks and performances with dance hall women. At last he grunted sourly and got up.

"You are the bulliest drunks and performers with the women that ever was—here in camp. But let you get to town and you'll line up in some redeye joint and log your heads off. Whistlin' old Jemima Jeezus, you make my tailbone ache! I'm goin' to roll in."

He turned with one springy movement and strode between the rows of three-decked bunks. Larrity didn't mind the smells from the tumbled gray blankets in each bunk. He had been used to them since he was a boy. Beans, salt pork, and sourdough bread for grub. From ten to sixteen hours a day in the woods. The stink of drying work clothes and heaps of dirty blankets at night. That was the life of a logger, a timber beast, a camp man, for you, and Larrity didn't question the right of it. He pulled off his socks, overalls and shirt. The muscles of his arms, shoulders and back made bulging ridges in his red undershirt. He was a moose of a man, this star bullpuncher of the Wishkah. He crawled into his blankets and tried to think of Christmas—four days more and he'd show these Aberdeen bullies how he'd performed on the Menominee and the Kennebec. When he was done with Swede Henry the name of Black Larrity would be known all over the Gray's Harbor timber country. . . . A pale oval face drifted before him. . . . Blue eyes. . . . Scared eyes. . . . A religious girl like that, living so close to a bullteam camp. . . . Timber beasts. . . . The loggers around the heater heard a growly mutter from among Larrity's blankets.

"Puncher's in a mean humor to-night."

"Yeah. Prob'ly dreamin' he's takin' the bulls down a thirty-per pitch."

"More likely dreamin' he's chewin' on Swede Henry's ear."

"'Low they'll tangle, right enough."

"Juh hear Slab Gilkerson tell how a stickup tried to lay Larrity out with a dray stake once? Well, Larrity went down, but when the stickup went to make his frisk Larrity hooked him. Come to that quick and choked him dead with one hand. Come clear of course. That was back in Saginaw."

"Good ol' Saginaw, where they was a sawdust mountain forty miles long and a saloon and dance hall every quarter."

"All run by Paul Bunyan, wasn't they?"

Larrity snored. He had to roll out every morning at four to feed and rub down the bullteam and nothing could keep him awake long after he was once in his blankets.

The others soon drifted to their bunks. At nine o'clock the lights were blown out. The ding-dong would rouse the men for breakfast at five. Long hours in the big timber made men sleep hard. The bunk shanty sounded with a chorus of hearty snores. The glow on the sides of the heater soon died out. The smells thickened and settled in the cold, dead air.

Down at the docks of the tidewater town of Aberdeen the storm rattled through the rigging of schooners moored to load cargoes of lumber. It romped among the houses of the town. The dance hall girls slouched about empty tables. The bartenders loafed over their bars. Aberdeen was a dead town now. But Christmas was only four days off. Just wait!

IV

ALL OF the loggers from the Wishkah camp were on the road the day before Christmas, but Black Larrity tramped into Aberdeen alone. The December wind was still on a rampage, blowing in a drizzle from Gray's Harbor. Heron Street was veiled in the foggy rain. Lights were shining through the windows of stores, restaurants, dance halls and saloons. The calked boots of a thousand loggers scrunched the wet boards of sidewalks as the bearded and mustached men in mackinaws and stagged pants roved from one saloon to the other. They straggled across the planks of the street to meet friends on the other side. Gangs gathered, whoops and laughs filled the air, bottles were passed around. Shingle-weavers, mill hands, fishermen and sailors stood aside for the men of the woods. Hard-looking customers eased among the gangs, searching for those who might be relieved of their rolls without too much trouble.

Amid this scene Larrity lost the black scowl he had worn for the past four days; his eyes got a hot gleam, he threw back his bulky shoulders, tossed his head, and seemed to snort. This was the good old stuff. The town didn't know him yet, but it wouldn't be long now until he'd be a king of performers here, just as he had been in the old timber towns.

In the first blocks from the left bank of the Wishkah the saloons packed Heron and Hume Streets—the Humboldt, the Mug, the Whale, the Eagle, the Combination, the Gem, the North Pole, the Blazer, the Circle, and many more. Square-fronted one- and two-story buildings of wood in rusty paint, all resting on piling or on ground made by a fill of sawdust and edg-

ings. The best bars, such as the Humboldt and Blazer, had new floors, but already these were freckled and splotched from the calks of the loggers' boots. Twice a year these popular saloons had to lay new floors. Such tough joints as the Circle had iron-bound bars and sawdust floors. The sidewalks had slivery hollows, except where new planks had been nailed down. Aberdeen was still a rough-hewn frontier town.

Larrity cashed his check over the bar of the Blazer. A star bullpuncher was paid the tremendous wage of one hundred and fifty dollars a month and board. Big Al, the boss of the Blazer, counted out twenty twenty-dollar gold pieces for Larrity.

"Bankin' any, Mr. Puncher?" he asked politely.

"Nope."

"Better, lad. Some stickup'll slip you a blackjack or knockout drops and roll you. You can bank what you want in my safe here and I give you a receipt. You're safe in the Blazer but there are joints where you'll be gypped quick."

"I'm safe anywhere," said Larrity. "I like to jingle my gold."

He bought a round for the house, then pocketed the double-handful of gold. Then he went to a barber shop, had his hair trimmed, his face and neck shaved, and got himself magnificently oiled and powdered. Out into the fog, then, and back to the Blazer, where he bought two quarts of bar whisky. He uncorked each one and pushed pinches of finecut into the necks. The liquor took on a richer and darker hue and the tobacco threads curled beautifully as he shook the bottles. Larrity recorked them and stuck one in each mackinaw pocket. A logger always liked to pass around a bottle whenever he bumped into some bunch or other between saloons. And in a gang battle a quart bottle clutched

in each fist made powerful weapons. Now he was all set to perform. Now he would show them how to celebrate Christmas!

Two thousand men from the bullteam camps, the lumber and shingle mills, the ships and the fisheries, were also ready. In the Blazer four aproned bartenders rushed and sweated between spigots, bar and till. Big Al, the thick-necked, fierce-eyed owner, who prided himself on running the squarest place in town and on having the muscles to keep it square and peaceable, was cashing check after check and banking for most of the loggers. His safe held twenty thousand dollars before midnight. The loggers were six-deep before the bar. The bottles and glasses were skidded through splashes of beer and furrows of foam. The bartenders picked up wet dollars and half-dollars and the loggers picked up wet quarters and dimes of change. The rush was so heavy that the bartenders had no time to swab off the bar. The fog was thickening outside and the saloon lamps threw a richer glow over the scene. The splattered and foamy top of the bar shone. The mirrors back of it reflected light into the drinkers' faces, making them appear handsome and bright. The rumble of talk and the clink of glasses quickened; shouted jokes and bawls of laughter sounded; all of a sudden there was a blast of hot argument, a hard tramp of feet, a thud, a grunt—and Big Al swung around the bar. He pried the two battlers apart, made them feel the power of his grip, then brought them to the bar.

"Drink together on the house," ordered Big Al. "Then keep the peace, or I'll work you both down with a bungstarter. This ain't no knock-down-and-drag-out joint, my lads."

Somebody smacked a twenty-dollar gold piece on the bar.

"Set up the whisky! Everybody drink on a Michigan man!"

Big Al grinned and helped with the setting-up himself. The loggers were starting now, starting to blow 'er hard and fast.

V

THE DOORS never stopped swinging. Loggers tramped in and loggers tramped out. Few were staggering any yet; the night was hardly born. But the street was darkening fast and few gangs were lingering outside now. It was ramble from one saloon to the other; at suppertime head for porkchops and eggs; then to the dance halls and the dance hall girls when the pianos began to thump and the fiddles to squeak foot-teasing tunes.

Dance and drink until midnight. Then in the Eagle, Black Larrity began to get up steam. There was a rich glow inside his head and his thoughts were running high and wild.

Hey, lad, it's a bum dancer you are, in logger boots, heavy and calked! No chance to slick and slide around in a fancy style. No chance to give the girls a treat with a nifty dancing show. But what the hell, Bill, what the hell! You're only a lousy timber beast anyway, here to blow in with the dance hall women! You're a camp man, old settler, a man who has to live away from women most of his days and get the timber out. Religious women look at you like a rabbit looks at a wolf. You've been "timber beast" to the good folks since a way back. So that's how you are what you are. That's why you perform. You got to get your high and mighty times any way you can. Well, lad, here's the fixings for you, here in your roaring old timber

town! Redeye to uplift your Jeezus-jimmed soul, booze-mooching whores to ease your heart! Yea, lad, you know they'd spit in your eye if it wasn't for your silver and gold! Love—love hell! But for just the feel of a soft breast against your pitch-streaked mackinaw, for that shaking look of hidden fire which only a woman—and any damned woman—can give—for these your dance hall woman will do—yea, when you're half-shot with the old redevye which'll make you see the woman you've always dreamed about in this painted girl with the circus dress! . . .

Yea, she'll do! She's a plump young one, soft and warm, so hold her close in the dance, grin and dream like an oary-eyed fool—then buy a drink and see her pocket the check. She pockets the check, that girl in the circus dress. There's a red sash around it. Hell, and she's got a schoolgirl ribbon in her hair! A circus doll, a school kid; but look at the paint on her, swabbed on her cheeks, under the brown eyes sizing you up with a sharp stare that pinches the skin into fine little wrinkles around them. Yay, lad, you know what she is! But what the hell, Bill, what the hell! There's that soft look that smites you all over with the fire that smolders behind it—take 'er on, lad, for she's a soft, warm woman. Hold the flesh and smash the dream. . . .

So the hot thoughts swam in Black Larrity's head as he began to dance the early hours of the night away. It was good for awhile; he was having a high and mighty old time of it. Tramping and swinging around in calk boots to the sound of piano-thumping and fiddle-squeaking, bumping into loggers dancing so with other girls; it was just that, and between dances slap down four bits for the drinks and see her pocket half;

but that is her trade, so come on, girl, for another dance!

They talked . . . her name was Babe, that was all . . . she bet he could lick any ten men in the dance hall . . . oh, so he was a bullpuncher; he must have a big stake, lucky man . . . she got awful sick of this dance hall life sometimes, so many of the men were brutes when they were oary-eyed . . . it was wonderful when she could meet somebody like him. . . .

But her eyes kept wandering to a slim, hard-mouthed young man in a handsome checked suit, a young man with shiny hair slicked and curled elegantly over a pasty forehead. Larrity saw her glances . . . but he wouldn't see. Hell, he knew how it was, right enough. But Babe was in his arms now. She was his woman . . . for awhile. . . .

At two o'clock Babe went with Larrity to the Blazer, as the dancing was stopped. The wind was higher than ever. Larrity breathed deep of the fresh wet air. Two o'clock in the morning and time for a bully logger to perform. He swung his legs in a long stride and Babe's slippered feet pattered on the soggy boards. The Blazer was jammed with a roaring mob. Six bartenders were handling the rush. The glasses of beer and whisky were passed back from hand to hand. The shrill voices of dance hall girls sounded among the chesty rumble of logger talk. Above the drab shades of the hanging coal oil lamps a drift of blue smoke hid the ceiling. On kegs and in chairs men who had drunk themselves off their feet lolled and snored. Big Al stood at the end of the bar, grinning from the corner of his mouth whenever a joke was shouted at him from the crowd, keeping his eyes peeled for pimps

and stickup men. His was a logger's saloon and he protected his trade. A young logger staggered up to him, seized one of Al's suspenders to steady himself, and asked for fifty dollars from the safe.

"You'll get nothin' till in the mornin', you polluted Siwash!" growled Big Al, and pushed him away.

The young logger weaved through the crowd, looking for sympathy.

"Won' give me my own money, the suhvabish! Call' me p'luted Siwash! Juh hear him, Bill? Call' me p'luted Siwash! An' I jus' wanna woman. Tha's all. An' I gotta have money to get a woman. An' he call' me—"

Larrity had elbowed through the crowd, and now he swung Babe up and set her on the bar. With one foot on the rail and one elbow on the bar, he faced the loggers. The red and black checks of his mackinaw sleeve flashed up, then down, and the bar shook as his fist smacked a twenty-dollar gold piece on it.

"Whisky for the house!" he bellowed.

"Who's that bully?" the loggers were asking one another as they poured the treat down.

Larrity heard and looked for a chance to show them. It soon appeared, in the person of Swede Henry, the broad-beamed bull of the woods. He was roaring drunk and the loggers respectfully made way for him. He crowded toward Larrity, and he leaned both thick elbows on the bar beside Babe.

"Ay got money to burn!" his chesty voice boomed. "Ay skal set 'em oop for house, too. Bartender, you got Swedish whisky? Ever'body don' drink Swedish whisky ay ban go'n' roll in sawdust wit'!"

Then he stared at the splatters of beer and rolls of foam on the bar.

"Clean off de bar for Swedish whisky!" he ordered.

"Swab it yerself," said a weary bartender.

Swede Henry's gray eyes glittered; then he saw Babe perched at his elbow and he grinned.

"All right. Ay tank ay do."

Swede Henry grabbed Babe by a foot and an arm, leaped like he was on a boom of logs, and slid the dance hall girl over the bar's flooded surface, crashing glasses to the floor, rolling a tide of beer and foam before her. She screamed. Swede Henry started a laugh. It ended when his right jawbone seemed to be driven through the other. The bar mirror exploded before him in a blaze of stars. The blaze turned into a cloud of milk-white smoke—then Big Al was shoving him out to the street. Swede Henry began to bawl cusswords in his native tongue and tried to push back past Big Al.

"Out with ye, Swede Henry, till you can be decent. You try a performance like that in my place again and I'll smoke you up with my four by five! Take yerself to bed, or go fall off the dock."

With Babe perched beside him again, Larrity was leaning beside her as a hero. Some bullpuncher from the state of Maine had set 'em up in his honor. He heard the old Aberdeen loggers saying that this was the first time Swede Henry had ever been knocked loose from himself. "Never saw him go down from one sock before." "A fightin' devil, that black Irishman, you ask me." "Yeah, where's he from?" "You know 'im, Sully?" "Yeah, he's been punchin' bulls in Swede Henry's camp. They ain't done with each other yet. One of 'em's gettin' a new job after this shutdown. Slab Gilkerson used to perform with Larrity in Michigan. Says he bumped off a bartender with his bare hands back there." "The hell! Some bully, hey?"

Larrity heard, and gloried. So it was in the timber country. You got glory with your muscles and your fists. A star sleigh teamster and white water bucko in the Lake States, a star bullpuncher here on the West Coast, a star performer in both the river and tide-water towns. That was him, all the time. All the time. . . . His head was afire with liquor and the heat the short battle had aroused. His knuckles ached. Enough for to-night. Yep, performing enough for this time. To-morrow was Christmas—hell, it was Christmas already! Christmas, logger, Christmas! Blow in! Blow in! Booze up and battle and get a woman for yourself! That was Christmas for a logger—have a high and mighty time until his silver and gold are gone. That was it for a logger, bully one or not. Just a time in town, then out to the timber, eleven-hour labor, salt pork, tough beans and sourdough bread to eat, a stinking bunk shanty to sleep in, and lousy blankets for a lonesome sleep. Back to the life of a timber beast! But what the hell, Bill, what the hell! A pocketful of gold, and it's time to perform! Come on, Babe. . . . Got a soft, warm woman for Christmas. . . .

VI

THE WIND never rested on Christmas day, and there was always rain in the hard wind. The restaurants had their turn at the loggers' stakes between noon and night. "Roast turkey with dressing and cranberry sauce. Home-made mince pies." In the hotel dining room there were white cloths on the tables. And the diners were served with wines. Calk boots, stagged pants and mackinaws were not wanted there. But the loggers didn't care a damn. To hell with the highfalutin stuff!

At the hotel bar you could have Tom and Jerries and eggnog, drinks rich and hot. But to hell with that too. Redeye was good enough. Redeye in a joint where a man can whoop and sing and perform—come on, bullies, to the Blazer! We've got our money in Big Al's safe!

All of Christmas day loggers streamed through Heron Street, flowed in and out of the saloons. The Christmas blow-in reached its high tide at night. Big Al had kept the peace in the Blazer, but in the joints it had been a different story. In one a logger had taken a swing at a crooked faro-dealer and got a bullet in the groin in return. He was in the hospital now, the bullet still in him. A doctor had probed for it for an hour, and then given it up. Probably he'd die. Two brothers were looking for their younger one. Last anybody'd seen of him was in the Eagle. Probably he'd been slipped some knockout drops, rolled, and then eased through a trapdoor into the river. Yep, prob'ly. That was the way she went. A pore damn logger certainly had to look out for himself in this tough town.

But most of the talk along the bar of the Blazer was roared boasts of performances of the night before and promises of the performances that were to come to-night. It was Christmas, the great day of the blow-in. To-morrow the loggers would calm down and talk logging as they lined the bars. But to-day they had to perform. Black Larrity had a gang around him and he was buying most of the drinks, as a bullpuncher lousy with gold was supposed to do. But he didn't brag. He only scowled and wiped his mustaches as he listened to the others. He was waiting to show them what real performing was like.

"Hey, big fellow, Swede Henry's out again! He's

oary-eyed and all primed for you this trip! He's lookin' for you, big fellow, and out for blood!"

"Where's he now?"

"Over't the Circle. Better steer clear of him, big fellow!"

But Black Larrity was already on his way. There was no Big Al at the Circle. Anything went in the Circle, from frisking to bloody murder. The bar was in a black, foul room. In the back of it were tables of gambling games. Swede Henry was bending over a roulette wheel when Black Larrity swung over the sawdust floor and jammed against him.

"What are you peddlin' about me, hey?" Larrity's voice was hoarse from the rage into which he had worked himself coming from the Blazer. "You ready to settle, squarehead?"

Swede Henry stepped back from the roulette table, glared at Larrity for a short second, hunching his head down between his shoulders, and then he charged.

It was no stand-up-and-knock-down battle. The two giants clinched, dug their calks through the sawdust and strained to pull each other down. Larrity's arms were on the inside and he worked his paws to get a clutch on Swede Henry's bull throat. But there was tremendous strength in the arms and shoulders under that neck and Larrity had to grip the mackinaw collar just to hang on. He swung his knee for the Swede's groin. As he did, Swede Henry yanked savagely; both fighters were thrown off balance; they hugged each other and heaved, twisted, staggered, reeled, swayed, lunged, from the bar to the kegs along the wall, from the kegs to the bar again, up and down, their calks gouging splinters out of the rough plank under the sawdust, while they grunted and growled like two

fighting bears. Larrity's struggles grew savager every minute. The red snapped in his black eyes and his bared teeth shone under his coaly mustache. He unloosed the grip of his right hand from the mackinaw collar and clawed for the Swede's ear. Swede Henry forced his right arm on around Larrity's neck, clamped it in a strangle hold, and as Larrity heaved back against it the two went down, with Swede Henry on top.

Bartenders, gamblers, dance hall girls, loggers, everybody in the saloon, crowded around the prone fighters. Men streamed in from the street. The news spread to the other saloons. Two bullies were putting on a regular old-time riot of a fight in the Circle.

On the floor Larrity was throwing every move into breaking the choking hold that Swede Henry had clamped on his neck. He did loosen it enough to gasp in some air, but the powerful Swede still had him foul as they threshed over the floor, sending up clouds of sawdust with their kicking feet. Had him foul and was going for his ear. That was the mark of a man who had been licked in a logging town fight—an ear mangled or missing. Larrity's head was slowly being forced against Swede Henry's teeth. He felt hot breath on his cheek. A desperate lunge lifted his head farther out of Swede Henry's hold just in time, but he felt a grinding pain in his neck. A violent lust for murder blasted through his head, spread a blaze of red before his eyes and shot his muscles with fresh fire. He rammed a hand above the Swede's shoulder, his clawing stubby fingers felt an ear, the thumb pushed into an eyesocket, jabbed against a soft ball, and into the grip and push of that hand Larrity forced all his strength.

An animal-like bawl of anguish roared in his ears.

The big bulk on top of him went limp, rolled away. Larrity got to his feet. He heard his own breath coming in hoarse wheezes. Faces rocked madly before him. One, lower than the rest, had its left cheek covered with a bloody smear.

There was the door—yep, there she was—and now here he was, out in the dark, the rain wetting his face, the wind fanning his burning eyes. Coming back to himself now. Was nearly choked under. First time any man had ever taken him off his feet. Nearly marked him as a licked man. He put his hand up to his throbbing neck. Swede Henry'd bloodied him some, after all. Teeth marks to carry—but they were in his neck—there was the Blazer. Now that mob'd have something to talk about! He could hear 'em. . . . "Swede Henry was goin' for his ear and Black Larrity popped his eye out on his cheek just like you'd squeeze a pit out of a prune! There's a performer for your whiskers!"

Yep, popped it out just like you'd squeeze the pit out of a prune. That was performing for anybody's whiskers. For anybody's—holy Jeezus, but his neck did ache! It'd be stiff as a board in the morning. Well, let 'er be stiff. He'd go on performing. Other bullies would try to fight him down, go for him with teeth, calks and claws. He'd clean 'em all. He, Black Larrity, was the fightingest fool on the Menominee—but this wasn't Michigan. He was logging on the Wishkah, blowing his stake in the tidewater town of Aberdeen. No further West for him or any other logger. The last timber country, the last land for a lousy timber beast. Here he'd have to stick. This was the town for the rest of his blow-ins. This was the end of the cruise. . . .

VII

WHERE THE LIGHT shone out from the windows of the Blazer the rain slanted in fine gleaming lines. Larrity stopped to feel his wounded neck again. His hand brought away a fresh smear of blood. The rain trickled it between his fingers. He wiped his hand with a bandanna, then wrapped his neck and turned up his mackinaw collar. The wind slapped rain around him with a sudden lusty puff. It carried a smell of the sea and of the timber. The old timber . . . the skid-road . . . the bulls heaving around the level bend, loping down a steep grade . . . the old stable was warm at four in the morning and then coffee and beans were good . . . and at night gabbing around the heater. . . .

Hell, he was going soft. It was a lousy old life. Nothing else. You had to have blow-ins to look ahead for, or you couldn't stand it. Any way you stood it you was a timber beast. Nothing else. A man whose folks had forgot him and whose woman was never any better than a dance hall girl. A religious girl would look at a timber beast like a rabbit looks at a wolf. He'd seen one do it. But he knew he could be good to a woman like that. He might bloody up the bulls and go to the floor with a Swede Henry but he'd never hurt a woman, not even one like Babe. He could never forget how that religious girl had looked at him. Funny he had to think of her now.

Hell, he was going soft. And getting sober. You can't go soft when you're a timber beast, lad! And to get sober on Christmas! Come on, bully! Remember what you are! Perform! Perform!

There's a gang tramping up the boards from the

Circle Saloon. Swagger into the Blazer now, plank down a twenty, set 'em up, as a bullpuncher should, set 'em up for five straight rounds, and listen to 'em tell how you took Swede Henry to his needin's. Hear 'em tell how there's going to be a new bull of the woods in the Wishkah camp! Yea, lad, you got to perform! You're a timber beast from now to the end. So what the hell, Bill, what the hell!

THE OLD WARHORSE

I

THE big Menominee & Tacoma mill—sawing average, two hundred thousand feet, board measure, per ten hours—was roaring close to the end of a payday shift. It was a rainy February day and the lights had gone on at four o'clock. There was a white blaze of them over the markers at the head of the long green-chain, and over every sawing machine. Saw steel glittered from trimmer, edger, resaw and slasher, as the sharp teeth of circulars and bands bit and ripped through boards, cants and slabs. The screaming songs of the saws and the rumble of live rolls filled the big millhouse with a tumult of sound.

At the headrig the sixty-foot bandsaw was a silver flash of ripping steel. A brute of a stick seven feet through and eighty long was on the carriage. The two doggers and the setter had to climb the log's side to catch the signals from the head sawyer's cage.

In that cage, with the log deck on his left, the carriage and its gigantic burden squarely in front of him, and the wide silver ribbon of the big band flashing on his right, stood old Johnny McCann. He had stood his ten hours a day in this cage for twenty-five years. He had stood in others like it back in Saginaw for fifteen more.

Head sawyer. Boss of the millhouse floor. A great

lumbering operation centering around the skill of his eye and hand. A mighty life. Ay, it was a tremendous job, this one of sawing up the big timber. You felt like a general or a king when you got a great beauty of a log like this one off the deck and lined up for the bandsaw. Your eyes sized up the hundreds of year rings in its end. An old-timer. A tall tree before Columbus hit this new world. Ripe for lumber now.

The sapwood is deep. Slab her heavy and hard. Square her down to the sweet fine-grained clear. Keep the figures of your orders in your head, Johnny, old horse! Get the taper of the log! Signal the carriage crew with your left hand—why the hell is the lad so slow, that setter, that boy of yours, young Johnny McCann? Ease over this lever in your right hand, now—she moves—the old headsaw sings—boom! down the live rolls goes the first slab! Back with the carriage, the big beauty of a log showing a face of clear sapwood. On again—down the rolls—back—ahead—now a jiggle of the left-hand lever to lift the mighty steel gooseneck hook of the turner—slab her on!

Forty years of it in a head sawyer's cage, still old Johnny McCann could thrill like a youth at the cutting of an ancient giant from the forest. The years rolled away from him then. So did his troubles. He even forgot the hot lead in his feet and the shooting pains in his legs. He forgot his worry about the superintendent bending over the sheets on the log-scaler's desk. He was a head sawyer in all the glory of fighting a great bulk of sawlog into lumber. He felt the levers in his hands, he saw the steel hook of the turner jerking the log down on its slabbed face, and the carriage plunging ahead; and he heard the screaming thunder of his bandsaw as it ripped through bark and grain; he felt, saw, and heard no more. He was a hero, a king—

and then the quitting whistle boomed through the mill.

The roar of machinery and the screams of the saws died away in a drone. Old Johnny McCann leaned on his levers and gazed miserably at the great log on the carriage. He had lost it. The night shift head sawyer would have it now. The sawyers and helpers were streaming for the door, all black shapes in the glaring light. The broad-beamed young setter swung away from the carriage, calling over his shoulder:

"Won't be home for supper, dad. Eatin' downtown."

II

OLD JOHNNY didn't hear. His gaze was on the superintendent, who was slowly approaching from the scaler's desk. Old Johnny felt his legs giving way under him. He gripped the levers hard. His mind seemed to be turning numb from the burning ache in his feet; they shot pain clear to his eyes. That's the way she goes, lads. Forty years of it, forty years of standing dead still and at a strain in a head sawyer's cage, then the old legs and feet give out, the old hands get a little shaky and slow, and the super comes up, flushes, hems and haws, and finally blurts out the sad, sad news. The time has come. Life's got you down at last. You're old, you're old. No use to buck it. But it's—well, hell, let 'er go. . . .

Old Johnny McCann walked alone from the company office to his home above the tideflats. On other payday nights the blue check in his pocket had made a glow that spread all over him, but now it was cold. He hobbled along, the wind blowing rain over his bowed head. Back of him the great domes of waste burners and the small lighted squares of millhouse win-

dows shone through smoke and darkness. Old Johnny McCann was feeling like an exile, a man driven from his native city. Forty years as the king of a millhouse floor, and now . . . the superintendent's words kept pounding in his ears. . . .

"Sorry, Johnny. Sorrier'n hell. But you know yourself—we got to hold the cut up to two hundred thousand—you've dropped to one-ninety-five, then ninety—eighty-five—losing two hundred dollars a shift, the company is. . . . Hrrumph! . . . It's all right—all right! You've made us thousands extra in your twenty-five years. You've got a pension coming. You're going to be treated right. Take it easy rest of your days—that's better, huh? Hrrumph. . . . The lad? Sorrier'n hell about the lad, too, Johnny. Looked like he'd step into your shoes till awhile back. Can't stand for head sawyers hitting the redeye now, Johnny. Times have changed since the old Saginaw days. . . . Well, maybe you *have* got it coming. Well—I'll give you another month—one more payday, Johnny—just one more. A chance to go out sawing on your highest average—I'll give you that. . . . Forget it. Us old-timers got to stick together, Johnny. . . ."

The words kept hammering through old Johnny's head. A chance. Not a chance to keep himself from the waste pile—the shooting pains in his legs, the hot lead in his feet told him that. But for young Johnny, the broad-beamed lad who thought he could lick anything in life with a grin, a joke, or at the worst with a swing of his big white fist—ah, the hell of it, thought Johnny McCann. Blowing his check all night over the bar of the Owl. Laughing and joking all he could think of, with that soft streak in him. Would it turn hard at the chance for a real fight? Would he be willing to stand and battle by the old man's side? Old Johnny

had his doubts. He only knew that he himself would make one mighty effort to go out in a grand smash of sawing. . . . Well, a bit of supper, a spell of rest, then to look up the lad. . . . Old Johnny McCann hobbled on, his head bowed against the winter rain. . . .

III

SHAG HOGAN, day edgerman in the M. & T. mill, was picking a cigar from a box on the Owl bar. He was making his selection carelessly, without even examining the box, for he was gazing sideways at young Johnny McCann. The broad-beamed young setter had just ordered another round of drinks for the M. & T. gang. A contemptuous grin was on the edgerman's swarthy face. Old Johnny McCann saw that first, as he stepped through the swinging doors of the Owl. He knew what it meant; he knew what thoughts were in the edgerman's head. Something like:

"Keep it up, my fine buck. Drink the redeye down. But watch friend Shag take a cigar. Drink yourself out of your last chance at the headsaw, son; hop to 'er, lad, for that makes Shag Hogan boss of the big rig when your old man saws himself off his feet."

Sure, those were his thoughts, though he spoke aloud so friendly and fine:

"Certainly I'm a friend of yours, Johnny. I just ain't drinkin' to-night, that's all. Don't mind my takin' a cigar now, hey Johnny?"

"Cert'nly not, Shag. Good ol' Shag, bes' edgerman on the tideflats! Take dozen s'gars on me, good ol' Shag Hogan."

Old Johnny felt his hands unclench, turn nerveless and cold. What was the use? That was the nature of

the lad—puling drunk one minute, the next slobbering over the man who was all set to knock him out. No use—so old Johnny turned to go. As he did so he noticed that J. Michael Murphy, proprietor of the Owl, was conversing grandly with a nabob. As he talked he pointed at a faded and streaked steel engraving that was framed above the bar mirror.

"That picksher yer inquiren' about—yeah, it's been in my fambly for a hundred years," J. Michael was saying. "A fine, rare picksher it is. Come from the old country. Can't ye smell battle in it, though? And look at the harse. Ye never saw a braver harse in a picksher. Yeah, a fambly heirloom."

Old Johnny's gaze followed the pointing finger, and he grinned. The steel engraving was familiar to him. J. Michael had bought it from a pedler and hung it in his saloon back in the old Saginaw days. J. Michael had risen in the world out here on the Sound; he was a political influence and conversed with nabobs. Family heirlooms! Old Johnny felt an impulse to tell the nabob the facts about the engraving, but it was smothered by a sudden swell of emotion in his heart. In an instant the engraving had come to life with meaning for him.

It pictured the repulse of a cavalry charge in one of Napoleon's battles. The thing was vivid with an illusion of movement in a mass of panic-stricken horses. The background showed the enemy cavalry looming in pursuit. The battlefield was strewn with wounded and dying horses and men. But it was a hamstrung old warhorse in the center of the scene which had caught old Johnny's eye.

He was an old warhorse by the saber scars on his flanks, which the artist had taken pains to distinguish from his new wounds. His hind legs were sprawled im-

potently under him. Yet the heart of the old warhorse still throbbed with the fire of battle. That was beautifully shown. His lean, scarred, bleeding body was braced up on his sound front legs. His mane waved like a torn banner from his proud, arched neck. His teeth were bared at the onrushing enemy.

"Ah!" whispered old Johnny to himself, with huge astonishment. "To have known that picksher for so long and to have never really *seen* it afore! Why—why, it's me!"

Old Johnny McCann half-closed his eyes. The shine of the mirror turned into a bright mist. He saw himself as Roaring Johnny, a bully young sawyer in the white pine country far away. He mingled with the gang of his youth again. Tramped along with it to the big, red mill, the frost steaming off the sidewalk boards. He saw the cool, clear blue of a morning sky, he stepped high as the keen, frosty air tickled his ribs, he lifted his chest and was Roaring Johnny when he "helloed" his friends. Far out and away a snowy peak rose against the blue. Then a dark-green ridge of virgin timber, then stump-speckled, cut-over hills rolled down, with a light-green blanket of second-growth on the older lands near town. Steam wafted up in the sunlight from the booms in the millpond, the quiet water shining between the logs. The big, red mill, the black smokestacks, the white drifts of sawdust smoke, the whiter clouds of steam that puffed out from the exhausts. And the smells. The keen breeze bore down fresh and balmy smells from the green woods. It blew into his face the rousing pungent smells of green lumber and green sawdust. . . . Ah, it was a life to live over again! . . .

The life of the timberlands. His no more. Only to remember. But was it now? Old Johnny opened his

eyes and stared hard at the warhorse in the engraving. By thunder, there he was! There was his story! He, too, had a grand life behind him! And, by the holy old mackinaw, he was going down fighting in just that style! And right here and now he'd show the lad, Shag Hogan, and all the rest of the gang, who was still the head sawyer of the M. & T. mill! Yea, bullies! Sawdust and shavings are going to fly! Come on, old warhorse, look up at your old tilicum in the picture there, square your shoulders, shake the hobbles out of your legs, and horn in! . . .

IV

"ONLY TAKIN' CIGARS to-night, huh? Better put some redeye under your belt, Shag Hogan, and get some life into your carcass! For you've got a month of hell ahead of you, old-timer!"

There was a hush of amazement among the M. & T. men at the bar. Only one or two of the old-timers among them had ever heard their head sawyer's Saginaw bully roar. And old Johnny appeared about six inches taller and ten years younger to-night, as he jammed in between young Johnny and Shag Hogan. Old Johnny saw the wide stares of the sawdust savages and he shot a grim glance up at the old warhorse. More and more he was knowing how the brave old devil was feeling. It was kind of glorious, actually. The last grand stab in a mighty game.

"What are you buggin' your eyes about, Shag? Ain't you heard? Hell, I thought everybody in the mill knew I was due for the waste pile in another month. But you don't know, huh, Shag—you don't know you was brought here to take the headsaw when I passed out? Damn' innercent, ain't yuh?"

"Why, Mr. McCann, what you talkin' of?"

"Don't 'Mr. McCann' me, old-timer! I ain't no super. You know what I'm talkin' of—my last month on the headsaw. And I'm here to tell you it's goin' to be one grand smash! I'm tellin' you and the whole M. & T. outfit I'm out to bust all records for my finish! Two hundred thousand feet a shift won't be nothin' this next month! I'll send the cants down the rolls to the edger so fast you'll wish you'd never heard of a sawmill, Shag Hogan! You'll be skin and bone, time this month is out!"

The edgerman's pride was stabbed, and he roared.

"Th' hell I will! You never saw the day you could cover me up, you stove-up old Siwash! Nev—"

The last word was choked in the middle as he saw the flash of a big, white fist swinging at his mouth. Young Johnny had turned from puling to fighting. He bellowed and swung—but a gnarled old hand knocked the blow down and clamped his wrist.

"Just a minute, lad. I ain't ready to start on *you* yet." Old Johnny turned on the edgerman again. "I'm warnin' you fair, Shag. You'll have to cinch your leather apron up tight, spit on your hands and keep your carcass full of life if you handle the cants I'll roll down this month. Rest up good to-morrer, for Monday you ketch hell and halleluia!"

Old Johnny smacked a double-eagle on the bar.

"Set 'em up, bartender! Three rounds for the house on Roarin' Johnny McCann! Promenade to the bar! Drink to a month of sawin' such as has never been seen this side of Saginaw! Drink 'er down with an old warhorse of the timberlands!"

Shag Hogan drank with the others. He felt kind of sick, like he needed something. He could swear that the old sawyer was drunk. But old Johnny was steady

on his feet, though his straight body swayed like a pine in a big wind. Maybe it *would* be hell and halleluah. It was almost that right now, wrestling the big cants and tugging on the heavy edger levers. The toughest edging job he'd ever seen. He wouldn't stay on it an hour if it wasn't for the chance at headsawing which the super had promised him soon. A few shifts of extra heavy cutting might do him up. He was no fool. There was more to this than just a grandstand play on the part of old Johnny McCann. The old stiff had more on his mind than that. The kid—that was it, by the holy old mackinaw! He wondered now. If the old head sawyer was playing a game for the kid—

“Outside with you, lad. I’ve something to say to you alone.”

Young Johnny obediently pushed his big frame from the bar and unsteadily followed the old man out through the swinging doors. Shag Hogan scowled after them. He was suspicious. He had good reasons to be. . . .

V

THERE WAS a space of clear glass at the top of the glazed front window of the Owl Saloon. Standing on the avenue curb, one might look up and through the oblong of clear glass and see the steel engraving above the bar mirror.

The old sawyer kept his gaze fixed on the battle scene as he stood and talked to the big lad at his side. About them were the trolleys, the horses and buggies in the wide avenue, the black shadows of store buildings behind dim street lights, the bright spots along the sidewalks, marking the saloons, and the saw-mill men stringing by, hilarious over a payday night.

But neither man was conscious of the life of the avenue as old Johnny had his say. One looked at a picture that had come to life for him; the other grew sober under words spoken in a voice that carried him back to the years when he was a small boy flushed with the pride of his dad being the head sawyer in the biggest mill on the tideflats. Looking past the corner of the Owl Saloon, young Johnny McCann could see the red domes of the burners, the lights of millhouse windows. He began to feel something of what that meant to the old man. Maybe life was something more than blowing your paycheck, hogging down the redeye, sporting with the girls, raising hell, cocky and proud.

It had hurt when the old man talked to him about being an old warhorse on his last legs; then throwing it into him about having a soft streak, saying it looked like he'd need another setter to go out in the grand smash of sawing he'd planned. It was the hurt of a scolded boy, and something else from boyhood welled up in young Johnny now. That feeling of his dad being a hero—it had stirred again at this talk of ending up like an old warhorse. That was it, right enough. The old man had sawed his way from the white pine sticks of Bangor and Saginaw to the big firs of Puget Sound. Battled the big sticks from a sawyer's cage for forty years. Young Johnny wanted to throw his arm around the stooped shoulders. But you could only bristle and bluster when words were coming at you like the licks of an ax.

"Your cocky hell-raisin' has left you jug-headed on the setworks, and that's what's knocked down my cut more'n any failin' of mine! The super knows. He didn't bring Hogan here on my account! You ain't got a chance to step into my shoes now, son!"

"To hell with it!"

"Yeah. All right. Hold your dander down. I ain't out for no lecksher. I'm thinkin' of myself, my finish. How I make it is up to you. You *are* the best setter on the tideflats when you want to be; you're the only one, son, who can help me bust all sawin' records this last month and go out like an old warhorse." Old Johnny's voice quavered a little there, then it sounded steady and hard. "If you're goin' to lay down, say so, and I'll find a setter who'll see me through, anyway. I want to know now."

"Who the hell you think you're talkin' to, some ten-year-old? Certainly I won't lay down!"

"That's all I wanted to know." Old Johnny felt his knees shaking with relief, but he wouldn't soften. "Then come on home."

VI

A HEAD SAWYER needs legs like two tough timbers. He stands on one spot and in a strain all through his shift. When the last cant is dropped from a sawlog and the carriage is shot back and ground to a stop in front of the log deck the sawyer steps on a plunger with his left foot and the dogs that hold the first of the log deck turn are released. The sawyer's left foot then shoves a foot throttle down, steam pounds into a cylinder below the mill floor, and huge steel arms leap up and shove the new sawlog against the carriage head-blocks. The sawyer then has both feet to stand on until the log is ripped into cants. His right foot hardly moves in its place until the noon and night whistles blow. Forty years of it, and any head sawyer needs new legs for his job.

Old Johnny McCann was needing new legs on the eleventh day of his battle. The first ten had made

sawmill history on the tideflats. Everything had been right. There had been a noble run of logs from the woods, all sticks between four and six feet in diameter. The only orders on the boards were for small timbers. So old Johnny only had to grade the clears out of each sawlog after slabbing off a face, and then knock off four to ten-inch cants for the edger.

It was beautiful sawing. And young Johnny had been with him all the way. Whenever old Johnny had felt that he couldn't last another minute, that he'd have to give in to the pains that throbbed to his bones, to the "weak trembles" of his knees and the burning numbness in his feet that made him feel like his shoe soles were hot lead—then old Johnny only had to look up and out of the cage, across the sawlog on the carriage, and see the broad-beamed young setter at his dial, showing new life in every move of him, and then the leg pains were fought down again.

It was marvelous what a change had shown in the lad that first Monday. Even the super had noticed it, remarking that it was too bad old Johnny hadn't got his hand in before Shag Hogan was put on the edger and promised the headsaw. Old Johnny had managed a twisted grin, though a ten-hour shift was done and his legs were about killing him. And he had said under his breath, "Don't be too sure who's to take my headsaw, Mr. Super. 'Tis only the first day of battle." A mighty day it had been. The cut had jumped to two hundred and twenty thousand feet, a record for the mill. And Shag Hogan was like a dishrag. He was more suspicious of old Johnny than ever. He had more reasons to be.

For the record was broken by two thousand feet the next day, and through the week it had climbed on, until two hundred and thirty thousand feet were

marked up by the scaler for Saturday. It had been a good thing for old Johnny that shift was a Saturday. Young Johnny had to go for a livery rig to take him home. But it was all right; the lad stayed away from the saloons that night; and he stuck home all day Sunday. He still bristled and blustered at every word that was said to him, bragged about the big drunk he would have when this month was over, and the like of that. Old Johnny wished him in hell and declared he'd fire him off the carriage in a second, once another decent setter showed up in the mill. One would have thought the two were sworn enemies. But what a week of sawing it had been!

Monday was a blue day. The cut dropped to two-fifteen. Still high over the average, but not enough. Shag Hogan had been freshened by a Sunday's rest, also, and he left his edger with something of a swagger Monday night. Tuesday morning old Johnny's eyes were bleak and his face was drawn with desperate determination as he hobbled into his cage. That day he cut two-thirty-five, with the edger table choked every minute of the shift. Wednesday and Thursday the old sawyer held the cut up to the high mark, and last night Shag Hogan, his long body as limp as an empty sack, his face sweat-streaked, his hair a wet tangle over his eyes, argued furiously with the superintendent. The super shrugged his shoulders and turned away, meaning that if the wrathful edgerman didn't like it he could quit. Old Johnny had to be carted home again, but there was a thrilling hope in his heart that more than made up for his wrecked legs.

It was hot lead in his feet, running snakes of fire in his muscles and the palsy in his knees this afternoon of the eleventh day. There was a cold spot in his heart from the feeling that this day was his last one

—the old warhorse was licked—the enemy was looming closer and closer above him, like a black cloud. Still it was never-say-die with old Johnny. He was sawing away at a mightier lick than ever. At mid-afternoon the scaler's figures showed that one hundred and ninety thousand feet of logs had already gone through the big headrig. If he could shove them on as fast he'd hang up two-forty for the ten hours, maybe more. The edger table was choked with cants; the lineup men were stacking them; and Shag Hogan was hog-wild. Maybe it'll be his Black Friday, thought old Johnny. The thought was made like a prayer, for he could feel his own finish drawing near.

VII

HE MIGHT last the day, but never the week, never tomorrow. Flesh and blood couldn't stand it. He could fight pain, fight it like an old warhorse, but when the old right leg began to sink under him as he tripped a log from the deck, he knew that the enemy was drawing close, ready to beat him down. Looking over at young Johnny, who was all wildfire for the grand smash of sawing his old man was making, showing it in the shine of his eyes, the flush of his face, his swagger and bluster forgotten now—that would make old Johnny fight pain, but it couldn't keep the strained old knees from buckling. . . . Was he going now? Not on your life! Be an old warhorse, Johnny McCann, to the last snort! . . . Rear up and show your teeth to the last damn' gasp!

He forced his mind back to the sawing. It slowed just so much whenever he let himself feel pain or think. His right hand quickened on the lever that stuck up from the floor by his right foot, and the carriage

shot behind the flashing teeth of the bandsaw so much the faster. Quicker again, and the carriage hardly seemed to stop before it was plunging forward, then slowing at the instant the log's end touched the ripping teeth, then crowding through, and another cant boomed down the rolls. Back and forward, back and forward, signal the setter—he's just the setter now, and not the big lad—now that much quicker with the left-hand lever—the giant gooseneck hook of the turner leaps up, stabs down into the sawlog, twists it like a cat twisting a ball of yarn, lifts, drops from sight as the steel arms set the log against the headlocks. . . .

Saw on! Saw on! Keep a-sawing to break another record to-day, Johnny McCann! Aye, old warhorse, you're Roaring Johnny again! . . .

The whistle shrilled for the millwrights. Black smoke rolled up from the edger with a stink of burning leather. Shag Hogan had stuck a cant in his circulars and slipped his drive belt. Take just one glance at him, old Johnny! See him jumping and waving his fists like a maniac. Saw hard now, old-timer! Pile the cants ten feet high on the edger table! Beautiful logs on the deck! Roll 'em along! . . .

The super was bawling into his ears, so as to be heard above the singing roar of the big band. What say—ease up?

"Ease up, hell! You want your big cut, don't you, hey? I'm sawin' logs!"

Forget the burning aches and pains! Quick on the levers, now, like you had the youth of the lad there behind the setter's dial! Harken to the old saw's song! Better than a bugle call, hey, Johnny McCann? See the cants drop and boom down the rolls not a dozen feet apart! Ain't that some heavy artillery, old Johnny? Pile 'em ten feet high on the edger table! Pile

'em up, you lineup men! Got to put 'em somewhere—the old warhorse of the timberlands is busting another record to-day—two-forty—two-forty—two-forty—you're going to make that figure, Johnny McCann! . . .

What's that down behind the edger table? Sneak just one look and see what's going on. Hell, it's Shag Hogan, shaking one fist at the pile of cants and his other in the super's face! And the super's bawling back at him—good glory, Johnny McCann, it looks like—yea, lad, there he goes! Off comes his leather apron, he jumps on it, heads for his locker, grabs his hat and coat, and out he goes, still shaking his fists, through the millhouse door! The super's taking the edger. . . .

Hey, old warhorse, you've licked 'em! Old-timer, the last battle is yours! It's yours. . . .

Ah, Johnny lad, it's all right now . . . all right . . . and the old warhorse needs a bit of help . . . he's sinking down . . . can't you see, Johnny lad . . . it was all put on . . . where's your big young arm? . . .

The big, young arm was around old Johnny a second after he had fallen between his sawyer's levers. From out of the grip of it a weak, old voice whispered:

"Take the headsaw, lad. She's yours."

IKE THE DIVER'S FRIEND

I

THE plank sidewalks were jammed with people who were out to enjoy the illuminated bicycle parade, the climax of Seattle's mammoth celebration of the Fourth of July. The bicyclists, men and women, boys and girls, some three thousand in number, pedaled in wide ranks down the city's main avenue, the wheel spokes flashing from the colored lights that shone in the fir bough arches fastened to the seats and curving over the riders' heads. The crowds on the sidewalks shrieked and cheered.

Edward Matthews, Esquire, still salty and rope-scarred from an enforced voyage from Liverpool and around the Horn, watched the parade with a severely critical eye. At last his throat swelled unbearably with censorious words. Utterance became a necessity. He turned to his left-hand neighbor, a tall, lean, stooped, broad-backed man who gazed down at him with mild, pale-blue eyes as he spoke. Said Edward Matthews, Esquire:

"It's perty enough, I'll s'y that. But you 'aven't the genooine science of cyclin' over 'ere at all. 'Oo in the paryde 'as the correc' poscher, I arsk you now? They 'ump theirselves like they was blinkin' rycers. It's the fault of their trynin'. They've never learnt the correc' cyclin' form, y'see. Scorchin', scorchin' is all yer blarsted

Yank cyclists think of. Now, you arsk me, I'll tell you wot's wot about the science of cyclin'. It's this w'y."

So Edward Matthews, Esquire, gabbled on about the science of cycling until the parade was over. The other man looked mildly down at him and never said a word. Then Edward Matthews, Esquire, remembered he was hungry. This big man who had listened to him with such attention must be liberal and kind. He'd try him out.

"I s'y, ol' cull, I'm a bit dry. 'Ungry, too. 'Ad a blinkin' lot of 'ard luck. Shanghaied out of Liverpool and 'ere just three d'ys. A strynger 'ere and I can't get work. On my uppers fer fair. Wot s'y you set 'em up? You do and I tell yer wot yer blarsted Fourth of July's all about. The American Rebellion, and all that."

The big man spoke for the first time, in a deep, flat voice.

"You'll have to write 'er, friend. I'm deefer'n hell!"

For a minute Edward Matthews, Esquire, was knocked cold. But only for a minute. His throat was parched, his insides were lank, and the big stranger still looked kind. Edward Matthews, Esquire, made the motion of hoisting a drink to his mouth. The deaf man grinned.

"Throat's itchin', is she? Let's drift into Ole's."

He pushed through the crowd and the little hungry man followed. There was no more gabbing until three schooners of beer and some fistfuls of rye bread, cheese and bologna were downed. Then words began to throb in his tongue. He hated to waste them on a deaf man. The born talker was puzzled. A kind, liberal man stood beside him. A good-natured giant kind of a man. A man worth having for a friend. A man who was anxious to have his mind improved by fair and reasonable words. But a man without ears to hear. That was the

blinkin' trouble. Then the deaf man solved the problem himself.

"Have another, mate," his flat voice boomed. "Have another and go after the free lunch much as you want. You seem like a pore, starved critter. You go on and talk some more, though. I like to be talked to. Nobody will hardly ever do it, for I'm deefer'n hell. I ruint my ears at deep-sea divin'. I'm longshorin' now. The boys on the beach call me Ike the Diver. I'm deaf, but you go ahead and talk. You're a born talker, I see. I've took a likin' to you. Don't know your name, so I'll call you Mouthy. Have another beer, Mouthy, then you talk."

This seemed to be a mighty long speech for Ike the Diver, as it made him sweat. Edward Matthews, Esquire, didn't need a second invitation; he started right in and he talked and gabbed until a stuffing of beer, free lunch and hoarseness laid him out. Ike the Diver hadn't said another word, but kept his pale-blue eyes smiling on "Mouthy." Now he carried his new friend down to his tideflat shack. In the morning Edward Matthews, Esquire, was awakened by the sweet smell of frying bacon and steaming coffee. He sat up in his blankets and his tongue started to rattle. Ike the Diver smiled and nodded his head.

"Talk some more, Mouthy," he said. "Mouthy, you just keep on talkin'."

That was how the strange pair got to be friends. Before long their friendship was famous all along the Seattle beach.

II

EDWARD MATTHEWS, Esquire, would have had a tough time of it in Seattle that summer of 1896 if it

hadn't been for Ike the Diver. Seattle then was only a sawmill town and lumber port. There had been a big fire in '89, but the place had grown again from the labor of men driving dock piling; logging the big timber; sawing lumber and stowing it in the holds and stacking it on the decks of ocean freighters; mining coal; and building houses and stores until the town was growing all over the clearings between the timbered hills that circled Elliot Bay. In August, '96, George Cormack was finding gold in the dirt of Bonanza Creek up in the Klondike territory, but the news was eleven months away. The people of Seattle were still only doing their work around the town. They never dreamed that in another year the town would be booming into a city, and all because the whole country was in a fever over the news of frozen Northern gold.

It was a lean year for workingmen. The waterfront saloons along Railroad Avenue had more penniless men lounging around them than they had customers. Whenever a ship tied up at one of the docks the chief stevedore picked his men at the pier shed gate. The saloons were always emptied then and the longshoremen made a yelling, milling mob at the gate; leg-aprons buckled around their waists and knees, wooden-handled iron hooks swinging from their belts. The boss stevedore picked his favorites. The lucky ones were formed into gangs of hatchmen, slingmen and truckers. The discharged cargoes were barrels, bales and cases of dry goods and groceries, crates of machinery and furniture, sacks of vegetables, tubs of butter, casks of wine, and kegs of beer. In the empty holds were stowed cargoes of lumber and coal. Longshoring was grinding labor in '96. There were twenty-hour shifts.

If there was a rush to get a cargo stowed the long-

shoremen were held to the hatches and slings for a straight ten hours. No time off for lunch. No blowing spells. Let a man kick and he was shoved off the dock and a tougher one was picked at the gate. Stowing green lumber would exhaust a man with the back of a mule. Stacks of rough green timbers and boards ten feet high on the dock floor. Heave the lumber off the stack. Pile it on the sling till a load was made. Straighten up for the ten seconds it took the winch-driver to hoist the load head-high. Then bend over and heave lumber till another sling was filled.

That was the work of the men on the sling gangs.

Down in the holds the hatch gangs sweated in half-darkness, dragging the lumber into place, binding each board and timber so that the cargo would not shift in the roughest sea. It was labor for broad-beamed men like Ike the Diver. Edward Matthews, Esquire, might have been a first-rate handler of light cargo on the wharves of Liverpool, as he claimed, but the boss stevedores turned him down on the Seattle docks.

"Avast. You're no good for this lumber cargo. All right, Ike, you deaf Siwash. All right for you, Ike."

That was it, nearly every time.

Edward Matthews, Esquire, never allowed himself to grow resentful and bitter over the treatment he had from the boss stevedores. Whenever there were enough ships in port for him to be picked at the gate he showed there were no hard feelings by telling the walking-boss all the details of the superior style of Liverpool longshoring, telling it on even after he was asked to shut up. When he was turned down he was never bitter and resentful but only philosophical. He would philosophize to the general public in Pat Noonan's saloon, he would philosophize to himself as he tidied up the tideflat shack and he would philoso-

phize to Ike the Diver when his friend dragged in, half-dead from rassling green lumber. This was how he put it up to Ike one early winter night, after he'd sliced the bacon and had it sizzling on the stove.

"It's perty orful, Ike, ol' man; it's orful and sickenin' for a civilized chap like me to 'ave been lugged orf like a dead cow and berried in a blinkin' 'ole like this 'ere. I feel sometimes like I'd lose all my sperit, I do. 'Ere I am, Edward Matthews, Esquire, of Liverpool, England, and I 'ave to stoop and truckle to the boss stevedores of a mud 'ole of a port like this 'ere one. Berried to my eyes in it, I am. A pearl 'as been cast before swine, if I do s'y it myself. All they can s'y is, 'Cast orf! Avast, you blighter!' And me knowin' more about stowin' cargo than the 'ole blarsted lot of 'em. If it wasn't for you, Ike, ol' man, I'd starve, s'elp me! Much they'd care. Well, I'm wytin' and wytin'. I'm a patient philersophical man, I am. That's Edward Matthews, Esquire, of Liverpool, England. My time'll come, says I. 'Be a philoserpher, Edward,' I always says to me when the boss stevedores turn me down at the gate. And I always am. My time'll come, Ike, ol' man. And when I'm a boss stevedore myself, or a wharfinger, more likely, if I get a bit more of ejucation, I won't be forgettin' yer friendship. You don't know 'ow you've comforted this pore exile, Ike—"

"Hey, Mouthy, the bacon's burnin'!" bawled Ike the Diver, rising on his bunk until he rested on his elbows. "Go on talkin', Mouthy, but turn over the bacon!"

The philosopher had been tapping his left palm with a fork as he talked. Now he turned and jabbed the bacon in such a hurry that he splattered sizzling grease on his bare arm.

"'Ow!" he yelped. "'Ell!"

The burns hurt and he only swore about them to himself while he stirred the frying potatoes, threw a dash of cold water into the pot to settle the coffee and sliced some bread on the scarred oilcloth of the home-made table.

"Hurry up with them spuds and bacon, Mouthy!" boomed Ike the Diver. "I'm so hungry I could eat the tar off a rope! Get the grub on the table, then talk all you want. Get the grub on first, though, Mouthy!"

"In a jiff', Ike ol' man. In a jiff'. Yer ol' woman'll soon have yer supper fixed. A bit of patience, Ike ol' man."

It was a good meal and Ike the Diver's pale-blue eyes beamed as he scooped down the bacon and potatoes and watched his friend talk. Nothing he enjoyed better than seeing Mouthy talk. He liked to watch the lights change in the wide, solemn gray eyes, the liveliness of the wrinkles above the working jaws, the sober down-turning at the corners of the mouth under the thin, drooping mustache. Ike couldn't understand what the talk was about, but then he couldn't remember any talk in the days before he was deaf that had been particularly worth understanding. Mouthy sat and talked and the tideflat shack wasn't so lonesome any more. . . . But he was tired. . . . Twenty hours of heaving lumber.

"Got to roll in, Mouthy. Like yer talkin' but I got to roll in."

III

THAT WAS it with Edward Matthews, Esquire, and Ike the Diver, nearly every night. Their friendship grew

stronger as the winter months passed. For four months the little Englishman failed to be picked at the gate for ships that steamed and sailed through the winter fog of Puget Sound for Seattle docks. But Ike was often picked and he kept grub in the tideflat shack. Every kind of work was scarce and Pat Noonan's and the other saloons along Railroad Avenue were packed with idle men. Below Yesler Way loggers and sawmill hands in pitch-stained overalls, mackinaws and ducking coats loafed in joints like Billy the Mug's or in the lobbies of flophouses and stared through the windows at dray teams plodding through the everlasting rain.

By the middle of December the news of George Cormack's strike on Bonanza Creek had reached Circle City and Forty Mile. But Alaskan news was still ice-bound and Seattle never heard it. She was still just a working coast town, building up on lumber and coal.

Spring days and work opened up. Loggers and other working stiffs drifted to the woods, the mines and the mills. Fishermen sailed the sound again. Hatch gangs, sling gangs and truckers were busy along the beach. Edward Matthews, Esquire, was picked at the gate twice in ten days. He made fifty dollars and he bought two slabs of bacon and a sack of potatoes for the tideflat shack. And he gave good old Ike a royal night of it. For the first time he was the one who bought all the beer over Pat Noonan's bar, the one who led the way below Yesler, took a whirl at the games in the Standard Gambling Hall and paid for performances in the Paris House.

All the while they were blowing in Edward Matthews, Esquire, philosophized. And he allowed himself a few dreams. The boss stevedores were learning at last what a man he was. His time was at hand. He'd

be a walking boss himself in a short while. Then he'd prove that what he was doing to-night for good old Ike was nothing at all. Nothing at all.

"You're talkin' good, Mouthy," Ike the Diver said again and again. "Mouthy, you just keep on talkin'."

Edward Matthews, Esquire, felt sore and heavy in his head the next morning. His stomach didn't feel exactly right, either. And he seemed to have a poor hold on his philosophy. He was silent at least half the time as he and Ike tramped up to Pat Noonan's and waited with other longshoremen for a boat. There was no work that day or the next. It was another slack spell on the Seattle beach. It lasted until the *Portland* steamed down from Alaska with a load of wild-eyed miners and a ton of gold dust from the Klondike. Then Seattle began to boom and roar. Every man was thrown into a fever by the marvelous gold stories of the miners. Every man except Edward Matthews, Esquire. He philosophized louder than ever; he got so interested in telling everybody about the folly of mankind in going crazy over gold that he couldn't work a ship. Nobody would listen to him. The boss stevedores fired him off the docks because, as he told Ike, he was talking too much common sense to the longshoremen. But Ike the Diver wasn't watching him much of evenings now, for he was always reading the newspapers when he came off shift.

IV

ONE SUNNY AFTERNOON Edward Matthews, Esquire, was sitting on a beer keg in the deserted bar-room at Pat Noonan's, philosophizing to himself about the folly of poor, blind humanity. All fair insane about the Klondike. All mad with a fever for the yel-

low dust of gold. Folly! Folly! Any thinking man would know that the rich big bugs would flock up to the Klondike now with their lawyers and hog everything. The poor should stay where they belonged. The poor should be made to see. But they wouldn't listen to fair and reasonable words. It was a mad, foolish world. Edward Matthews, Esquire, kicked the beer keg with his heel and hummed:

"It's the rich gets all the gryvy;
It's the pore that gets the blyme!"

But the poor helped the poor anyway. Good old Ike. Their friendship was fair beautiful, it was. The rich big bugs could hog it all they pleased but they couldn't touch the friendships of the poor. . . .

His philosophizing was broken up by the roaring voice of Hooks Bartell, boss stevedore of the Sound Steamship Company.

"What the hell you know about it?" growled Hooks to Pat Noonan. "What you know about it, Pat? These longshoremen's been starvin' for four years, but now they's plenty of ships and good cargo they're all achin' to hang up their hooks and hit for the gold cricks. How many's bought passage on the *Alki* and the *Portland* I don't know. Hope they all rot with the scurvy. Grief ahead, you bet! All the good boys pullin' off the beach and the wharf rats that'll take their places'll make it lousy as Liverpool."

Edward Matthews, Esquire, slid off his beer keg and made for Hooks Bartell like a bantam rooster flying at a bulldog.

"S'y, big feller, wot's the matter of Liverpool, I'd like to know? Wot you got to s'y agin Liverpool, you big stiff? Wot the blinkin' 'ell do you know about Liverpool anyw'y, I'm arskin' yer? Well, stand and stare

when I arks you a civil question, you 'ook-eyed blighter!"

"Do you want a drink?" asked Hooks Bartell calmly. "Have one. Anything you like. Only shut up."

"Talkin' about this beach gettin' lousy as Liverpool—w'y, you couldn't even dream about this beach bein' like Liverpool in any w'y, shype or form! W'y not, you arks me. And I tell you. Becorse this blinkin' ol' pill of a beach is such a blighted little ol' pill of a beach it couldn't even *smell* like Liverpool! Now mytey, yer arskin' me something about Liverpool, w'y, I'll tell yer something about Liverpool, in fair and reasonable words. It's this w'y—"

"Oh, shut your jaw!" bawled Hooks Bartell. "Shut up or I *will* amputate that jaw of yourn, as I've threatened time and again! Here, Pat, give him a scoop of suds. No such luck as this dock rat hittin' for the Klondike and freezin' his vokel cords or his jawbone—"

"Me? You arsk if I'm goin' in this blinkin' ijiotic gold rush? Me—gorblimeny, you arsk me if me, Edward Matthews, Esquire—"

"Get away from me!" yelled the tormented boss stevedore. "I'll have you shanghaied, damn' if I don't! Cast off! Avast, you mouthy hellion!"

Edward Matthews, Esquire, resignedly closed his mouth before a shaking hairy fist. It was always like that, he thought, as he drained the roomy scoop. They would never listen to him, the chief stevedores wouldn't. But he was patient and meek. Waiting for his time to come.

He returned to his beer keg, went to philosophizing to himself again, and shut his ears to the talk of the ignorant boss stevedore until he heard Ike the Diver mentioned by name. . . . "Yeah, he's just another of the good boys that's hangin' up their hooks.

Walked off the beach not an hour ago and booked passage on the *Portland*. Hell's bells, Pat, I'll have to stay full of redeye all the time or else take out for the Klondike myself. . . ."

Edward Matthews, Esquire, started to get up and tell the boss stevedore he was a blinkin' liar, that he showed just how much a boss stevedore on this beach knowed when he made a statement like that about Ike the Diver. But he sat down again. He remembered how Ike had been reading the papers since the *Portland* reached Seattle. Never watching him any more while he talked. Ike was only a poor simple soul—and even the mayor of the city had resigned his office and was joining the rush. It was likely true. Ike the Diver was going to the Klondike! The first real friend he'd ever had! It was shocking, that's what it was.

"Gorblimey!" groaned Edward Matthews, Esquire. A black cloud settled over his mind, making life seem foolish and foul. "Gorblimey, it's a rotten ol' lay agin. I feel like I could bawl. Ow! 'Ell!"

The boss stevedore went on talking to Pat Noonan.

"Pour me another snifter, old settler. . . . Hear about 'em dry-dockin' and paintin' the *Eliza Anderson*? Oldest sidewheeler on the sound. Been laid up for five years with the tides runnin' through her. I was down to the drydock and I could jab my fingers into her side anywhere below the waterline. She'll prob'ly drown a hundred on her first try for St. Michaels. Well, it's not my funer'l. I'm stowin' cargo."

Edward Matthews, Esquire, wanted to tell the real facts about the outfitting of rotten ships for Alaska but he was too downhearted. His philosophy was all gone. He could only think about Ike the Diver, and sit, and groan:

"Ow! 'E's leavin' me. Only friend I ever 'ad. 'Ell!"

V

THE NEXT AFTERNOON it seemed like all of Seattle was on the waterfront. Edward Matthews, Esquire, and Ike the Diver stood on the Schwabacher Dock, a mad crowd milling around them. The *Portland* had steam up. The rattling winches were lowering the last of the Klondike outfits into the hold. A line of men was pushing up the gangplank; the decks were already alive with faces and loud with shouts. Ike the Diver stuck out his paw, his pale-blue eyes got their friendliest shine, and the two friends had a long, solemn handshake. Edward Matthews, Esquire, felt his throat choke up and his mouth turn dry. His eyes were wet. He couldn't say a word, not one blinkin' word; he could only look up into the gaunt, wrinkled, good-natured face of old Ike and think of all the grief that was ahead. But there was nothing he could say or do about it.

Last night, when the two were alone in the tideflat shack, he had tried to write a philosophical warning that would wean old Ike away from folly. But his pencil could never throb out the words like his tongue could. It hadn't been any use. It wasn't now. Here in this drowsy sunlight, with the waters of the sound smooth and shining, with the city so peaceful on her green hills, it was easy for unthinking men to see treasure for the digging at the end of an ocean and river steamboat run. A philosopher like himself could see all the hardships and dangers of cold and starvation, scurvy and fever, and the greed and power of the rich big bugs and their lawyers. But it was too late for philosophy now. Gold! Gold! Gold! The *Portland* had brought down a ton of it. Men were

mad to get to the Klondike territory. Poor old Ike no less than the others.

The handshake was ended.

"So long, Mouthy. You stick to the shack and whenever you feel downhearted you just start talkin'. Talk about the times we'll have when I come down with a ton of dust. So long, Mouthy."

Ike the Diver was gone, tramping up the gang-plank.

Edward Matthews, Esquire, hadn't been able to say a word of farewell, though many words were throbbing in his head. It was no use to try to say them. Ike the Diver was mad with the blasted gold fever. He was going. For how long? Forever, most likely. . . . The *Portland's* whistle boomed and the steamship moved away from the dock piling. The crowd whooped and cheered. An answering cheer thundered from the decks. The smoke from the steamship's stacks rolled blackly against the blue of the sky. Her wake boiled and foamed. Rowboats and small sailing craft rocked over her waves as she swung out into Elliott Bay. The faces on her decks became splotches of white. The cheers sounded faint and far. The crowd on the waterfront was silent as the *Portland* turned into a fading black smudge at Three Mile Point. She was gone. Husbands, brothers and sons were gone—and friends, thought Edward Matthews, Esquire. . . .

"Yeah, you'll do for a hatch gang this ship," growled Hooks Bartell from the gate of the Sound Steamship Company. "But keep your trap shut or you'll cast off. Well, step along! Avast, Swanson, you're oary-eyed. All right for you when you sober up. Step along. . . ."

Edward Matthews, Esquire, was longshoring alone on the Seattle beach.

VI

THERE WERE plenty of ships at the Seattle docks in the summer days. The *Excelsior*, *Capilano*, *Alki*, *Mexico*, *Queen*, *Hueneme*, *City of Topeka*, *George W. Elder*, *Roanoake*, *Islander*, *Cleveland*, *Rosalie*, *Ohio*, *Willamette*, *Humboldt*, steamships and schooners, all that would float, were loaded with passengers and freight for Alaska, the Yukon, the Klondike. River steamers and monster scows were towed behind the ships. So Edward Matthews, Esquire, made the hatch gangs all summer long. The Klondike cargoes were like the light stuff he'd handled in Liverpool. Longshoring now wasn't the back-breaking, strong-arm labor of stowing rough green lumber. Down to the docks the drays carted crates of bacon, barrels of flour, boxes of evaporated fruit and vegetables, sacks of corn meal, rice, coffee and beans, bales and cases of corduroys, rubber boots, hobnail shoes, wool socks, mittens and gloves, suits of heavy underclothes and mackinaws, hats and caps, blankets and fur coats, bundles of picks and shovels, axes and saws, stacks of gold pans, rolls of tarpaulins, kegs of whisky, wine, beer and nails.

He knew the stowing of such cargo, did Edward Matthews, Esquire. His philosophy bloomed again. His faith in himself got big once more. Until the winter days were on again he saw a boss stevedore's job always within his reach. If he had kept his hope to himself and only dreamed about it as he did when he was in the tideflat shack the hope might have been realized that year. There at his lonely meals he saw Ike the Diver coming off an Alaskan ship next year; ragged, hungry, half-dead; greeted by a boss stevedore,

greeted by Edward Matthews, Esquire, risen in the world but still loyal and true, offering his old friend a soft checker's job—oh, it was fair wonderful, that dream!

But Edward Matthews, Esquire, was bound to tell his hopes and dreams all along the beach, in the holds and at Pat Noonan's. No one would listen, and some, especially the boss stevedores, would threaten to amputate his jaw and slit his tongue. That was how much sympathy and understanding there was in this blinking pill of a port.

"If you know so much about stowin' cargo, try to show us with something else besides your jaw!" Hooks Bartell, that ignoramus, would yell. "All I've ever seen your mouth do is to hold up a ship. Fall to or cast off!"

Thus unappreciated, Edward Matthews, Esquire, was still being picked at the gate, a plain longshoreman, when the winter rain and fog came to Puget Sound. Alaska shipping was stopped by the Northern ice. Now it was lumber and coal cargoes again. Never mind! The gold fever was still raging. By spring tens of thousands would be flocking to Seattle from all over America to go North on the first ships to sail. There would be more green longshoremen on the beach. The old-timers who had not been caught by the gold fever were stirred up now by the promise of fifteen-dollar a day wages in the Klondike. Edward Matthews, Esquire, warned them. A meal up there cost a dollar and a half. A pair of brogans cost a fortune. Whisky was fifty cents a glass. Tobacco was out of sight. There was the scurvy and the Yukon fever. He felt it was his duty to warn the old-time longshoremen who were left. But if they did go in the spring, well, so much the better for him.

Many of them did go on the first ships and it was

better for him. Seattle boomed and roared more than ever when the passage to Alaska was open again. Thousands swarmed First Avenue night and day. Below Yesler Way the gamblers, pimps and dance hall girls coined gold. What's the use of carting money to Alaska? That was everybody's cry. The city threw off her working clothes. Seattle became a dance hall queen of a town; that was what she was, a queen in a dancing skirt, with a red sash shining rakishly over her white shoulder, a glass of wine sparkling in her jeweled hand. The gold rush boomed and glittered its highest in the summer of '98 and Seattle got to be a regular dance hall queen of a town. She was never to lose that beautiful and devilish young spirit of hers.

Ships from the Alaska coast brought down more Klondike, stories and more Klondike gold. In hotel lobbies, saloons, dance halls, parlor houses and gambling halls hot-eyed men chanted the mighty story of the Yukon River, White Horse Rapids, Lake Lindeman, Circle City, Forty Mile, Dawson, the Chilkoot Pass, Skagway, and the gold-bottomed creeks—Indian, Dominion, Bonanza, Eldorado—trickles from the laboring old glaciers of the North. They chanted and sang. Dirt piled up in the long, dark hours of winter! Gold washed out in the light of the midnight sun! Gold! Gold! Gold! Tons of yellow dust on every ship! Set us out another snifter, bartender! All promenade to the bar! Yea, Bill, we're on our way to the Klondike and her gold-bottomed creeks! Gold! Gold! Gold . . . !

"It's no use talkin', I know," Edward Matthews, Esquire, would declare in Pat Noonan's. "No use. But I feel it's my bounden duty to call yer attention to the fac' that for every blighter wot packs a full chammy skin poke down a gangplank they's twenty be'ind 'im

wot's ragged and 'arf-starved, scurvy-eaten and fever-blarsted, 'avin nothin' but their gladness to be 'ome. 'Ow about the Copper River district, I arsk you now? 'Ow about the pore devils starvin' up there? And 'ow about the big rich bugs in the Klondike? You 'ear 'ow they're 'oggin' it all; don't you, mytes? 'Oo can buck a feller like this McDonald—king of the Klondike, they calls 'im. The rich bugs 'ave their lawyers and their gangs. I prophesied 'ow it would be. I warned 'em. But it's no use of talkin'. I only 'opes I'll 'ave my boss stevedore's job afore good ol' Ike comes back. A wreck 'ee's sure to be. But I, Edward Matthews, Esquire, 'll tyke care of my friend and myke 'im 'earty and 'ole, a man in 'is right mind agin. 'Ee's all I'm wytin' for, is Ike the Diver. To 'ell with yer blinkin' gold!"

VII

ON A DAY in July Edward Matthews, Esquire, was living the richest and fairest hour of his life. He was living it in Pat Noonan's saloon. In dignity and silence. Yes, sir, he was taking it blinkin' well, he thought, in exactly the proper spirit. His hopes had been realized, but he was still the philosopher, and thus dignified and silent. To talk now would mean that he must boast and brag. He would not do it. He only nodded and smiled when Hooks Bartell shook his hand, ordered two mugs of beer, and lifted his own as boss stevedore to boss stevedore. For Edward Matthews, Esquire, was a boss stevedore at last. Thirty minutes ago the manager of the newly organized Far North Steamship Company, an Englishman who could appreciate a longshoreman from the Liverpool beach, had

made his hopes come true. He was to begin his new duties to-morrow, he told Hooks Bartell, with just the proper dignity.

To-morrow—now let Ike the Diver, good old Ike, come back. He would soon learn what a true and loyal friend he had. He should be cared for as he had cared for Edward Matthews, Esquire, the unfortunate exile. He should be shown that philosophy also had its rewards. He should be shown the folly of going mad over gold. But gently, calmly, with tact. Edward Matthews, Esquire, would never lord it over his good old friend. Ike the Diver should have a decent, easy job. One that would do for him as long as he lived. . . .

The pleasant dream was broken up by an excited bawl that sounded through the saloon door.

"The *Roanoake's* dockin' at the Pacific Steamship wharf! Loaded with gold! Come on, mates!"

Edward Matthews, Esquire, followed the rushing mob with a dignified step. Seattle was emptying her uptown streets. People were running in droves down the hills and across Railroad Avenue. But Edward Matthews, Esquire, boss stevedore for the Far North Steamship Company, never hurried. Calmly and philosophically he watched the docking of the ship, and heard the mad yells of the crowd. He watched the haggard, bearded miners coming down the gangplank, with only sober pity in his eyes—until he saw shoulders that had a familiar stoop—a grizzled beard covered the miner's face—but there was no mistaking those pale-blue eyes. . . . "Ike, ol' man, Ike, ol' man! . . ." "Hello, Mouthy. What's the matter? Ain't you still a-talkin'? How you been makin' it, Mouthy?"

Poor old Ike, all gaunted up and worn down, dressed in ragged coat and pants, rough-shod, not a

total wreck as he'd feared, but in a bad shape, as anybody could see with half an eye. Edward Matthews, Esquire, felt his heart swell with pride. This was indeed his golden hour. Good old Ike—but he must let his friend know there was a good time ahead before he started talking. He had started a search for pencil and paper when he saw Ike opening the pockets of his mackinaw. They were crammed with greasy sacks.

"Thousands, Mouthy," said Ike. "I stagger when I carry 'em. We start out right now to paintin' the town, Mouthy—why, Mouthy, what's hurtin' you? Got a bellyache, Mouthy?"

For Edward Matthews, Esquire, had sat down suddenly on a pile of rope; and now he was bending over, holding his face in his hands, and groaning.

"'Ow! It's ever the w'y! 'Ell!"

Gold. Ruinous gold. It was ever a curse in the hands of a man like poor old Ike. It was shocking, horribly shocking, to find Ike a blinkin' Croesus. Staggering under a load of gold. Talking of painting the town first thing, of course. The beautiful plans were in ruins. Ike needed to be guided. He should not paint the town. Edward Matthews, Esquire, his true and loyal friend, would see to that. Ike should be guided and watched, made to keep enough of his gold for a fair living in his old age. He would be hard to manage. But it must be tried. No use to think of the chief stevedore's job now. That would have to be sacrificed. His duty was with Ike. How would he start to guiding, watching and managing him? He couldn't think just now. Not after such a shocking blow. Poor old Ike a blinkin' Croesus! The plans were in ruins—ow, but his mind was in *such* a blasted stew—

"Come on to the Rainier Grand Hotel, Mouthy," said Ike the Diver. "We're goin' to get us some

swallertails and plug hats, and then we're goin' to start paintin' the town, Mouthy."

"Ow!" groaned Edward Matthews, Esquire, as he got to his feet. "I must think and think. Wot to do? Wot is a philosepher to do with sacks of gold? 'Ell! To 'ave all my 'opes end this w'y! Ain't it a blinkin' shyne?"

The philosophy of Edward Matthews, Esquire, never had a chance against Ike the Diver's gold. It was shaken as soon as the pair entered the gilded lobby of the hotel. The plush and draperies in their magnificent bedroom brought philosophy down. The plug hats and swallowtails smothered it. Its lifeless form was washed away as the champagne flowed.

"We'll start at the Horseshoe, Mouthy," announced Ike the Diver, when the two were in their plug hats and swallowtails. "I've always wanted to make a splash in the Horseshoe, Mouthy."

VIII

THE HORSESHOE was a beautiful uptown saloon with solid mahogany fixtures. Its mirrors were French plate glass. The fixtures had taken the grand prize at the Philadelphia world's fair back in '76. A solid silver horseshoe, with nails, toe and heel calks of solid gold, shone in the middle of the bar. The great mirror was fenced by little mirrors in horseshoe frames. Bottles with rainbow labels were stacked between polished mahogany columns. Mountains of crystal glasses sparkled and flashed from snowy beds of linen. The floor was the finest colored tile. The brass footrail was polished every hour. There was a great safe built like a vault, with deposit boxes where the Klondikers could safely store their dust.

Ike the Diver tramped to the bar of the Horseshoe, deposited his gold, and ordered champagne for the house. And the story told by Edward Matthews, Esquire, about his friend's great strike in the Klondike was listened to by men whose white fingers sparkled with diamonds.

Philosophy was all forgotten. The Standard Gambling Hall, with its twenty-five games of faro, roulette, chuckluck, fantan, blackjack and poker, knew the pair on their first night of painting the town, and on many other nights. Ike the Diver bucked the wheel and when he lost, Edward Matthews, Esquire told the rubberers how his friend could lose a thousand times as much and never miss it. He was listened to with respect now, for he wore a swallowtail and a plug hat and he was the partner of a Klondike man. He read his name in the newspapers, saw a description of himself in print. The painted ladies of the dance halls and parlor houses were enchanted by his society conversation and listened humbly when he moralized about their life.

Aye, it was fair glorious, it was. How was a man to think, how was he to keep his philosophy, how was he to remember that it was his duty to guide his friend and watch over him, when he was enjoying such glory, wearing a plug hat and swallowtail, drinking champagne, being admired by the ladies and by sports who wore diamonds, and, best of all, being listened to whenever he talked? How was he now? Remember the bitter life he'd always had. And now it was fair heaven, it was. He'd philosophize with Ike the Diver soon enough. Show him he should have something for his old age. There were pounds and pounds of gold dust left. Thousands of dollars. A few would be enough.

The best of all was down at Pat Noonan's. The famous pair nearly wrecked the waterfront when they got all the longshoremen of the beach jammed into Pat's place. Ike the Diver bought so liberally that Pat had to hire three extra bartenders. And at last he had to send to the wholesale house for a load of champagne.

"We'll buy our old mates nothin' but champagne, hey, Mouthy?" said Ike the Diver.

Edward Matthews, Esquire, solemnly nodded agreement. It was nothing but right. Give the poor some of the rich big bugs' fine fun when there was a chance, he said. He talked without a break for a full two hours; for every time Ike the Diver ordered another round of champagne, he would say:

"It's good to see you talkin' again, Mouthy. You just keep on talkin'."

And the longshoremen hearkened—they who had scorned him so before! Aye, it was fair glorious, it was!

The two friends painted the town for a week—two weeks—a month—two months—and at the end of October the owner of the Horseshoe showed Ike the Diver an empty deposit box. Ike blinked his pale-blue eyes for a moment, then he grinned down at his friend.

"Looks like we'll have to take the old hooks down again, Mouthy. Guess we'll have to trade our plug hats and swallertails for mackinaws and overalls, Mouthy!"

Edward Matthews, Esquire, had nothing to say. He was knocked cold. He'd thought there were thousands there yet. It was shocking, simply horribly shocking. Broke! Ike the Diver was a poor man again! Not a blinkin' cent left to protect him in his old age.

And it was all the fault of Edward Matthews, Esquire. Just when he had needed it most, he had let his philosophy go. Ow!

"Well, Mouthy, we've had a high and hellin' old time of 'er anyway," said Ike, still grinning. "We sure painted the town, Mouthy. Guess it's us for the old tideflat shack now, though. Let's rustle some bacon and spuds and you can cook us a good supper, Mouthy."

The next morning Hooks Bartell was picking them from the crowd of longshoremen that was milling around in the rain before the Sound Steamship Company's gate.

"Hell, here's our millionaires back again! All right for you, Ike. Step along. Cast off, Mouthy. You're no damn good for this lumber cargo. Step along. All right, Swanson. Packin' anything on your hip? Got to stay sober, mind. Step along. . . ."

Swinging his hook, Ike the Diver tramped on through the gate. Edward Matthews, Esquire, turned back towards Pat Noonan's. It would be the same old story all winter, most likely. Loafing at Pat's, waiting for a chance at a ship. Frying the bacon and spuds, boiling the coffee, slicing the bread for good old Ike. No chance to be a boss stevedore next summer. Opportunity only knocked once, all the philosophers agreed. Well, he'd got his own philosophy back anyway; he'd proved it right, and that was a consolation. His time had come. But he'd been ruined by gold. Hereafter he could only hold himself up as a warning.

"Look at me standin' 'ere," he would say. "Once I was full of pride. Onct I was a blinkin' millyunaire, a bloated Croesus, I was. Look on me, young man, and tyke warnin'. Alw'ys be true to yerself, as the poet says. . . ."

C. P. R.

I

IT WAS three in the morning before Shot McCune had the Metis villain, Johnny Flemmand, so blarneyed with whisky and words that he was agreeable to quitting the dance for the rough company of celebrating railway-builders in the barroom of the Coronet Hotel. The feat was something of a miracle. The dance was the most festive one Vancouver had ever known. All of the Vancouver belles and boys were out for the affair. To-morrow there would be a more ceremonious celebration of the coming of the first trans-Canadian train to the city. To-night youth cheered. And Johnny Flemmand no less, though the railway was an enemy of his life and kind. With his brilliant black eyes, flashing teeth and vivid clothes he glittered through the dance. Only one man cared when it was seen what an easy conquest he was having with Essie Creel, the slim, freckle-nosed, soft-eyed waitress of the Coronet Hotel.

But that man was Shot McCune, a veteran of the building of the U. P. and the N. P. and for five years a steel gang boss on the building of the C. P. R. He had his own stubborn notions concerning the man who should finally triumph with Essie Creel. Shot McCune knew that as a romantic lover he wouldn't have a look-in with Johnny Flemmand. But he had guile, he

could plot and scheme, and so at three in the morning he was leading Johnny Flemmand into the Coronet's barroom. Johnny Flemmand was already talking in his boasting style.

"Talk all ye like, me fine buck," thought Shot McCune. "Talk away—just so ye pour down the redeye!"

The two found a place at the lower end of the bar. There was a roaring crowd above them, and Sandy McBeath, the landlord of the Coronet, grinned through his scraggly beard as he watched the bottles emptying and heard silver and gold clinking into the till. He was usually a solemn and dour Scotchman, but not to-night, with a big crowd celebrating and a railway coming to his city to-morrow. His eyebrows, which were like two rusty tufts of moss, seemed to wave and glow as the gray eyes under them gazed from the lower end of the bar, where Shot McCune and Johnny Flemmand were drinking whisky straight, to the upper end, where six sailors from a Glasgow windjammer were drinking ale. The midnight bell had rung three hours ago. In a few more hours the sun would rise on a great celebration which had already begun. It would bring many dollars to the Coronet. Hark, now!

"Fill 'em up again!" ordered Shot McCune.

As he drank with Johnny Flemmand he looked with yearning upon the gang of railroaders—dynamiters, dirt-movers, gandy-dancers, spike-maulers—who were drinking together half-way up the bar. His ears caught snatches of bawled brags and arguments. His tongue ached to join the battle. But he must listen to Johnny Flemmand.

"You have ask' w'y I come to Vancouv'. M'sieu', my frien', me, I don' know. Eh, bien, I nevaire give wan tamn w'ere I go, w'at I do, any tam. I jus' come down to de railway wit' de gol' I tol' you I fin' on de Sas-

katchewan and me, I say to Jean Hercule Flemmand, 'Johnny, you go to Montreal, Kebec, Trois Rivières, w'ere you' père's people live or you see new countree Canayen. W'ich, you don' give wan tamn!' Dat's me, Jean Hercule Flemmand. Sacree mo'jee! W'at is anyt'ing now to me w'en Louis Riel, dat gran' man, is beat by l'Anglaise? I tell you of dat some tam, m'sieu', my frien'. You don' know de Metis, de Bois Brulés, de fur trade, les coureurs de bois, de voyageurs. You are railway man. You know not'ing true Canayen. Me, I t'ink you' tamn' railway she's spoil ever'ting."

"I expect yer right, Johnny," said Shot McCune, twisting his mouth into a grin. "Have another snort." To himself he relieved his feelings. Let the black villain brag all he wanted. Just so he poured the redeye down. "You may think yer slick with yer oglin' and sashayin' in a quadrille," thought Shot McCune, "but I'll show ye who's boss at this bar, me fine buck!"

"You was bon Irlandais," said Johnny Flemmand. "So I tell you many t'ings you don' know."

But he fell silent just then, having caught an enchanting reflection of himself in the bar mirror. Two moist curls dangled rakishly over his forehead from under the back-tipped felt hat. His black eyes, under thin level brows that had just the smallest devilish turn toward his temples at their ends, were glowing with a handsome shine. His glossy mustaches were widened in such a smile that they made a hairy canopy for his snowy teeth. The black silk handkerchief set off his shoulders beautifully. His chest bulged a red wool shirt with green buttons between the lapels of his coat. A row of bottles on the back bar shut off most of the reflection of the high top of his l'Assomption belt, but a few crimson, orange and purple checks flashed

from the narrow gaps between the colored labels and the fat brown sides of the bottles.

II

SHOT McCUNE was more than ever disgusted with Johnny Flemmand, as a man who could be so brazenly stuck on himself. He turned away for a minute to refresh himself with the pleasantly familiar sights and smells of the barroom. The glow from hanging kerosene lamps swam down through troubled clouds of smoke drifting from many pipes, it shone over the wide mirror and made gold splashes on the stacks of polished glasses. The mellow light made a pretty sparkle in the redeye wherever it trickled from bottle neck to whisky glass. Before the six sailors the bar blossomed with the foam of ale. Knotty hands waved up, down, and around in the smoky light; and now and again one of the hands would land with a lusty whack where a suspender crossed a wool-shirted shoulder. Shouted brags, bawled laughs and once in awhile boozy songs rolled along the bar. There were always arguments over the glasses. . . .

"Vancouver'll be a good town now, if we run out the Chinks." "Man, yer Yankee contractorrs br'ught 'em here, the puir haythen." "Yes, and we brought yer damn railroad here too, Scotty. Hadn't been for Van Horne, Shaugnessey and the rest of us from the States . . ." "I'm headin' for St. Paul to help Jim Hill shove his road to the Coast. No C. P. R. gandy-dancin' for your Uncle Dudley! Me for the States and the big job!" ". . . and I'm tellin' you straight, you dog-face' omadhaun, I drove the first drill in the rock of the Kickin' Horse Pass—" "Ye're tellin' me nothin', man! I wurrked in the rock from Lake Sooperior to

the Selkirks. I doot if ye were near the Kickin' Horse—"Here, you two, drink up and fergit yer argyments. I guess Van Horne and the rest of us from the States could never have built the road without you two!" "You and yer Chinks from the States be damn'!"

Shot McCune's ears quivered and his tongue ached for that talk. But he had business on hand and he returned to it with a sigh. Johnny Flemmand was talking again.

"Have another snort," coaxed Shot McCune.

Johnny Flemmand poured with such recklessness that he slopped liquor over the rim of the glass. The little pool of redeye shone on the polished wood of the bar until the bartender wiped it away. The wet towel left trails of liquid beads behind. Johnny Flemmand stared down at them as he drank and so did Shot McCune. The steel gang boss was a little troubled after this drink. For the first time to-night he felt heat in his head and smoke around his eyes. His heart bubbled so with alcoholic sentiment that for a minute he felt almost brotherly toward Johnny Flemmand. But that passed as Johnny talked on.

"You would say, m'sieu', a countree she's not mak' until she have de railway, she do not live till dis tamn' injinne she snort, w'istle, smoke, rattle de cars from town to town. Mais for me, Jean Hercule Flemmand, I say not so. I'm dog-drive', me, M'sieu' McCune, and voyageur. De railway come, I go. She's come Sout', I'm gone Nor'. She's no tamn' good, you' railway, M'sieu' McCune!"

"Now you looky here, old settler—what the hell!" Then Shot McCune remembered what he was after and shut up. But Johnny Flemmand had caught fire. He thumped the bar and growled.

"You was get mad, m'sieu'? Me, I don' give tamn' for dat too. Jean Hercule Flemmand was fight many tams. Wit' w'at you lak!"

"Ca'm yerself, Frenchy," said Shot McCune, though his knuckles throbbed. "Ca'm yerself and have another snort."

Johnny Flemmand drank but he still sneered.

"You was from de States, m'sieu'. You don' know Canadaw. You t'ink you' railway mak her gran' countree? Non, m'sieu'. Canadaw was mak long tam ago by trapper, fur trade', voyageur. W'at you know of dis, my frien'? You are big and strong, you t'ink. Oui, m'sieu', but lak wan ox. W'at would you do wit' canoe? Spill him quick, by gor! You' big neck she's ben' and ache wit' de head strap on portage. You feet would break in de bottes sauvage, trackin' de boat up de river—you' feet would break on de stone of de shore. You' legs would swell and burn w'en de snow-shoes get heavy lak rock behin' de dogteam. You don' know de otter from de mink. And how would you mak you'self wit' de Injun and de Metis gal? I have see you dance lak de duck and I t'ink you sing lak de frog. You don' care I spik w'at my min' she's t'ink, M'sieu' McCune?"

"Oh, hell no," mumbled Shot McCune. "Just have another snort."

It was all he could say. He was about to choke. He felt like caving this black Metis' head in and being done with him. But he'd started with the idea of putting him to bed paralyzed drunk at the dawn of the celebration day, and he still stuck to it. He bought another drink.

"You is de bes' Yankee Irlandais I evaire see, by gor!" Johnny Flemmand exclaimed. "W'en you see un homme you know he's un homme! Sacree mo'jee, I lak

you tamn moche! I tell you more t'ings you don' know, my bon frien'."

He drank his redeye down and now his black eyes got a softer shine. And a kind of singing came into his voice. Shot McCune listened with a satisfied smile.

"De men who mak Canadaw were de voyageurs, m'sieu'. I know how she was of ol' from mon père. His père was big voyageur for de ol' Nor'west companee, w'at fight wit' l'Anglaise of Hudson's Bay. You know, m'sieu', how de Nor'westers would go from Montreal wit' goods to trade for beaverskin wit' de Iroquois and de Cree? No. Well, de canoes was fill' wit' blanket, beads, musket, powder, shot, tabac, w'isky blanc, and wit' pemmican for eat de voyageurs. Me, I have heard and I can see and know how dey sing and paddle away. Out dey go from Lachine, up Lac St. Louis, w'ere de St. Lawrence is grow fat and big; all a singin' de chanson, 'En Roulant ma Boule.' "

Johnny Flemmand went to singing it himself in French, and Shot McCune said to himself:

"Praise all the saints! Sing yerself to sleep, me fine blackbird!" Then he called to the bartender. "Fill 'em up again!"

"Ah, m'sieu', dem ol' chansons!" Johnny Flemmand's voice was husky and it throbbed with feeling as he lifted his glass. He drank. "Ah, my friend, I have dream' moche of de ol' tams. I have nevaire seen de St. Lawrence but from mon père on de Red River I have hear'. De voyageurs would swing de paddles, keepin' tam wit' de singin', and on to w'ere de brown water of de Ottawa flow in de green St. Lawrence, aroun' wes' side de Isle of Montreal. De Ottawa she's boil and roar into de St. Lawrence, so dere is canal by de rapide. De voyageurs paddle to de village of St. Anne and moor at de ol' wharf. At church

de priest mak long prayer to le bon Dieu and many saints for de voyageurs. And it is paddle on, up to lac of de two mountains. It is not all paddle and sing, m'sieu'. Dere is hard portage by many rapide—Carillion, Long Sault and Chute au Blondeau. It is hardes' work you can nevaire know, my frien', goin' by paddlin', trackin' and portage up to de gran' Chaudiere.

"I was know well, me, Jean Hercule Flemmand. Not on de Ottawa and de St. Lawrence but on de Red River, de Assiniboine and de Saskatchewan. To dem we was drive', us Metis, mon père, me, Jean Hercule Flemmand. So my people mak Canadaw gran' countree, mak de posts of de Nor'west traders, mak de posts for l'Anglaise of Hudson's Bay. Wit' Louis Riel us Metis was nation and we would have de Saskatchewan for ourselves; but you' railway she's bring de queen's soldiers so quick—zzt!—flyin' so over de prairie, swoopin' on de fores'.

"Me, I don' lak de railway. I lak go by canoe to de free beaver meadow, and wit' de carriole and de dog-team. I am son of de voyageurs. But I am same as de exile. I could cry for myself, de exile, m'sieu'. I could cry, my frien', for de ol' tams, w'en de voyageur was king, w'en beaverskin was gol'. It is ruin, dis bon Canadaw. You' railway has mak her so—a ruin' countree for Jean Hercule Flemmand, son of de voyageurs and de Bois Brulés. I am sad, my frien'."

Johnny Flemmand pushed back his hat and shoved his fingers through his hair like he was about to tear it out in sorrow for the voyageurs. Sandy McBeath drew near and eyed him solemnly.

"I'll take care of this lad," said Shot McCune, whispering behind his hand. "A few more shots and he'll be paralyzed. Then I'll cart the black bum up to bed."

III

JOHNNY FLEMMAND had dropped both hands to the bar, and now he was swinging from side to side, bowing his head and staring down between his arms with swimmy eyes. He certainly appeared to be nearly gone. But it was mainly from the effect of his orating and singing. Shot McCune was overheard and Johnny Flemmand straightened up with a snort and his palm smacked the bar.

"I trink no more as you, M'sieu' McCune!" he roared. "And you say I am paralyze'? Me, I can trink w'isky blanc by de gallone! Evaire tam I stay on my feet, me, by gor, de las' man! You say you cart Jean Hercule Flemmand to bed? Sapree maudit! We see, m'sieu'! It is you who will trink off de feet. Garçon! W'isky encore!"

Shot McCune exploded at this challenge. His romantic purpose went up in red fire and blue smoke. He was all Irish wrath.

"Ye never saw the day ye could do ut, ye black-eyed lynx!" he bawled. "Sure, come on with the redeye and I'll pay for every snort! We'll see how big ye talk in aynother hour!" And then his jealousy broke out in words. "And I'll be showin' ye who's to take Essie Creel to the celebration to-day too, ye Metis villain! Ye were cute enough with yer dancin', smirkin', oglin' and sashayin', but I'll get ye foul with the redeye, me hot-footed buck!"

"I don' boas' of my dance," sneered Johnny Flemmand. "She is not so moche. It is jus' you dance lak de duck is mak my waltz look so fine. And you sing lak de frog, M'sieu' McCune. De same t'ing you fight wit' de tongue, my frien'?"

"Come out back and I'll show ye how I fight!" yelled Shot.

"Eh, you don' trink me off de feet, no? I t'ink you was goin' cartin' me to bed?"

"We drink or we fight. Anything ye like, damn yer black eyes!"

"Eh, bien. We trink. Garçon! W'isky encore!"

The news grapevined through the crowd. Glasses were held in mid-air as all eyes looked down the bar to where the rivals faced each other. Shot McCune's back was to the crowd. His left foot was on the rail and his left elbow was on the bar. Johnny Flemmand's right foot was on the rail and he leaned on his right elbow. He poured with his left hand. Glare answered glare as both men lifted their glasses. The back of Shot McCune's head tipped toward the watchers; Johnny Flemmand's chin pointed toward the lights over their heads; and then the two emptied glasses tinkled dully on the wooden surface of the bar together.

"Another snort," ordered Shot McCune.

Many of the railroaders recognized the voice.

"That bully'll drink a dozen frog-eaters off their feet, takin' 'em one at a time!" declared a Yankee spike-mauler.

"Ye don't know the Metis, if ye say that, man," protested a burry voice. "I'm bettin' on the black un mysel'."

"How much?"

"Five—'twas enou'."

"Ah, ye close thistle! Well, put up or shut up!"

The betting spread. Sandy McBeath held the stakes. At the sixth round there were five hundred dollars in his hands. He began to feel the importance of the event and he motioned the bartender aside and lorded it over

the rivals' bottle himself. As they drank it empty and called for another a smile began to shine through his scraggly beard. Between his rusty bunch of hair and the mossy tufts of his eyebrows his forehead got warm and damp; it shone like a rose after a heavy dew. This was certain to be a famous drinking bout and the story of it would make gr-rand advertising for his hotel. Sandy McBeath scowled as the noise of an argument rose among the gang of railroaders.

"You couldn't fill this steel-boss with redeye if you poured it down him with a funnel, I'm tellin' you! I know this bully and I know what I'm talkin' of!"

"Ye don't know whusky blanc and ye don't know the Metis, who lap it down like a pig guzzlin' clabber," the burry voice growled. "I'm tellin' ye, man, this Frenchy tuk whusky as a baby instead of milk!"

"Hush yer-r-sels," ordered Sandy McBeath. "Dinna distur-rb th' perfoormance."

The battle was getting hot. Before long, as glass after glass of the red liquor was poured down, the noisy talk of the watchers settled into a buzz of whispers. As the second quart neared its bottom there was silence, except for pipe-puffs and heavy breaths. The crowd stared, and waited. Surely one of the men would soon slide to the floor. . . .

Two glasses were left in the second bottle. . . .

IV

SHOT McCUNE set his empty glass down with tremendous care. And just as carefully he lifted the bottle. Slowly he tilted it—but the mouth waved and shook over the glass. Shot squinted his left eye shut. He raised his right eyebrow until he sighted down the

bottle neck with a straight one-eyed stare. That steadied his aim. He poured, and then he pushed the bottle toward Johnny Flemmand. Johnny's eyelids were bearing down heavily as he cocked his head to the left, gazed woozily at the bottle and closed the fingers of his left hand around it. He had forgotten to wipe his mustaches after the last few rounds and they hung, wet and limp, over his mouth. His chin was hanging so loosely that it wobbled with the motions of his arm. But he aimed fairly well. The last drop trickled from the bottle's mouth. Now Johnny Flemmand's fingers closed around his glass. Shot McCune followed his motion. Both glasses were brimming. The redeye twinkled and sparkled. It twinkled and sparkled from the light that swam down through the drifts of pipe smoke. Sandy McBeath's hands rested on the bar. Their backs were matted with rusty hairs. The two white-aproned bartenders stood above him, their hands on their hips. Nobody in the barroom drew a breath as Shot McCune and Johnny Flemmand lifted their glasses. Then one windy sigh rose from the crowd as the emptied glasses were returned to the bar.

The second quart was gone.

"Set up another," ordered Shot McCune.

When he had poured his first glass from the third quart of redeye, Shot McCune's left foot slipped off the rail and his right foot skidded out a yard. His backers groaned. But he hauled his feet back into place. He drank. And poured again. So did Johnny Flemmand.

The third quart was going.

When it was half-empty Johnny Flemmand started to pour, then his hand slid away from the bottle, and his eyelids slowly dragged themselves shut. His head

sank to the bar, then he half-lifted it and it wagged and rolled on his thick neck. He waved his hand around at nothing. And he spoke in a choked voice.

"I know w'y all so dark—lak twilight—she's chasse galerie—phantome is Jean Hercule Flemmand—in de phantome canoe I am come—from Saskatchewan—to de gran' fête and de people of mon père—lak of ol'—phantome voyageur at de fête—Noël, is no? And de gal—Essie, la belle sauvage—la belle sauvage—avec w'isky blanc—hooraw! hooraw!"

"The Frenchy's goin'!" somebody yelled.

At that yell Johnny Flemmand straightened up with a jerk. He grabbed the bottle, splashed his glass full, then gulped the redeye down.

"Mais non!" he roared.

"Ah!" groaned Shot McCune.

When he thought he was winning the smoke had cleared from his eyes. But now there was a hot smothery fog of it wherever he looked, even when he used his one-eyed stare. Three glasses appeared in the heat and smoke—three bottle necks—three red hands—and all jiggered and danced—but he poured. . . . The two drank again—again—again—and they were down to the bottom of the third quart. The two lifted their glasses, slopping out most of the liquor, and drank. With every one of the last few drinks the smoke had thickened around Shot McCune's head. Now it began to burn and roar. Out of the fiery fog a monster face showed itself, and shoved close to his own. . . .

"I tak—I tak her—to de—I tak—"

"Shu'll liksh 'ell—Metish shuzza—"

"They're goin'!" "Both to onct!" "Ketch 'em!" Excited bawls broke from the crowd as Shot McCune and Johnny Flemmand slid toward each other, growling and spluttering until their faces met. Their feet began

to slide; their elbows slipped; face to face and chest to chest, their heads hung low and their bodies sloped as they sagged in the middle, as their knees buckled and their elbows slid off the bar—they went down as one man and sprawled in one heap over the foot rail.

Then the crowd whooped and roared and jammed about the fallen. Sandy McBeath lumbered around the bar.

"Carry 'em to their rooms—7 and 12." Then he bawled at the crowd, "It was a draw! No man wins a bet!"

A big bell rang as Shot McCune and Johnny Flemmand were being carried upstairs. It was breakfast time. The red rays of sunrise broke through the curtained windows of the Coronet's bar. . . .

Essie Creel carried steaming platters of ham and eggs and pots of coffee to the dining-room table. She wondered once or twice about Johnny Flemmand, but that was all. There was a new man at the table this morning, a red-headed raidroad brakeman who had come over from Seattle to look for work on the C. P. R. He was young and the devil was in his blue eyes. He sat at the table till the other men were gone. Wouldn't she like to take in the big celebration to-day with a sporty young feller?

"Oh, yes! . . ."

Upstairs, dead to the world, lay Johnny Flemmand. Three doors below him and across the hall lay the bulk of Shot McCune. . . .

V

SOME TIME after darkness had driven Vancouver's celebrators to their homes, to the dance halls and the saloons, Wing Moy was busy in the kitchen of the

Coronet Hotel. He was wrapping up a roasted duck so that he could carry it under his blouse. Up in Chinatown there was a blossom who loved roast duck. Wing Moy heard the dining-room doors swing open and he chucked the duck under a down-turned pot. Then he turned and gazed calmly through the darkness. Eyes stared blearily at him through a tangle of hair.

"Where's Essie?" a hoarse voice asked.

"She gone."

"Where she go?"

"She gone all day celumblation led-headed man. Af' supp' she settem on lap by po'ch. Gone now dance." Wing Moy was anxious for this big Irish devil to get out. He wanted to hurry with the roast duck to his blossom. "Whassa malla you? Get dlunk all samee damn fool! No ketchum gal now. Somebody else ketchum. Go 'way. I got wo'k. Whassa malla?"

The door closed.

"What th' hell!" groaned Shot McCune, as he tramped up the stairs. "What th' hell!"

There was hot lead in his innards and cold lead in his head. He couldn't think. Hardly realizing what he was doing he pushed open Johnny Flemmand's door. The son of the voyageurs was awake. His eyelids looked like a dozen bees had stung them, his black eyes were dull, and his fine mustaches were all bedraggled and limp.

Shot told the news.

"Sacree mojee!" moaned Johnny Flemmand. "We was miss celebratione, gal, ever'ting, by gor! We was mak tamn' fine fools of us, M'sieu' McCune. I'm sick Vancouv'. Me, I t'ink I go quick by railway to Calgary and home to Saskatchewan. Back to de dogteam, de canoe and de beaver meadow for Jean Hercule Flemmand! Back to Metis gal and w'isky blanc. Dis

waitress gal don' give wan tamn for me, you, redhead, no tamn' man. We was bot' fools, my frien'. I don' be some more, by gor!"

Shot McCune heaved a sad, sick sigh. Johnny was right. He'd been a fool. Had to admit it. Yep. Past the time for copping women. Getting too old for such stuff. Well, he'd go on to Seattle. Then to a tracklaying job on Jim Hill's new road. Seattle. He'd never performed in that town. High and handsome tales had traveled from it over the N. P. . . . There was still plenty of gold in his money belt. The gloom lifted a little. That performance last night would be something to talk about anyway. He shook hands with Johnny Flemmand and dragged down to the bar.

"Say, Sandy, which of us win last night?" he asked hopefully.

"It was a draw; ye both passed out together," said Sandy McBeath.

"Well, hell!" said Shot, sadder than ever. "A reg'lar fizzle all through. Damn Vancouver anyway!" A shot of redeye made him feel better. "Well, Sandy," he sighed on, "that drunk last night wasn't much to brag about, maybe, though I feel like I'll never get over it. But if I do"—and Shot McCune's bloodshot eyes had some of their old glitter now—"I'll get on a *good* one!"

SAGAS OF THE SAGEBRUSHERS

THE RIVER-SMELLER

I

THE place to hear the bards and historians of Columbia River steamboating was the Club Saloon. It blazed its sign of the ace of clubs over Alder Street, a few steps from Portland's river front. There sternwheeler talk rolled high and loud over the clink of glasses and the purr of beer gushing from the spigot into the foam. Ah, the old days when the sternwheeler was the queen of traffic in this Northwestern land!

The settlement of the Northwest was made by sternwheel. The mining fields of the Bitter Root and Sawtooth ranges, the Northern Idaho valleys and the Spokane prairies, the Palouse and Walla Walla wheat sections, the sheep ranges of Eastern Oregon, the rich irrigated valleys of Southern Idaho—all were settled and supplied by the sternwheeler, queen of river craft. She dispersed supplies up the freighting trails to the cattle country of Central Oregon, her cargoes fed and clothed the towns of the Willamette Valley, and the little settlements between Portland and Astoria, and she conquered the savage rapids of the Upper River. Sternwheelers floated the Northwest's lumber, wheat, wool, ore and livestock to market. They carried the holiday crowds. Their races were the great sporting events. After the first phase of Northwestern pioneering, people moved and lived by sternwheeler until the coming of the railroads.

The sternwheeler fleets made a royal life. Fifty boats whistling out of Portland every morning. Racing away, most of them heading down the Willamette for the Columbia. Many were towboats. Towing wind-jammers to and from Astoria. Towing log rafts and barges. Two or three queens leading the fleet. One of these supreme. A thousand-ton passenger boat, forty feet wide and two hundred long, a model-bottom craft with a thirty-foot sternwheel; flags on her bow, striped awnings over her decks; passengers in swallowtails playing cards and drinking wine, bourbon and beer in her men's cabin; ladies in long, ruffly, silk dresses promenading the decks. It made a beautiful sight, one of those queenly steamboats, flying along like a great white bird on a sunny Sunday morning.

On such points the bards and historians who foregathered in the Club Saloon were all in agreement. The subject of racing, however, always brought on ferocious debates. The steamboat historians, like historians everywhere, abandoned the record, even denounced it when their loyalties were aroused. If a historian had been a fireman on the *Telephone* in the old days, his loyalty would never allow him to admit that his boat had ever been beaten by the *Olympian* on the Ilwaco run. The historian who had been a deckhand on the *Olympian* might show up in the Club the next night with a newspaper, crisp and yellow with age.

"Here y'are, in plain black and white! Now, what you got to say?"

"Don't give a damn. The *Olympian* never saw the day she could pass the *Telephone*! Bring all the rotted newspapers you want, you can't tell me differ'nt! Its a lie!"

Look high, look low, the frailty of historians is ever the same. There is little worth noting in their

sterile disputes. The bards, however, are more engaging. Regard Spud Hawley, cook on the *Jane Deal*, lone survivor of the passenger-carrying sternwheeler fleet. The words "facts and figures" were never known to issue from his eloquent lips. He had no passion for truth. But he relished the utterance of a novel tale as much as he enjoyed the passage of a scoop of beer from his mustache to the capacious depths sacred to liquor and food. Spud Hawley was always silent when the historians were disputing around him. But let the historians be absent when he bowed a fat right leg and set a heavy foot on the brass rail before the Club's bar, let him be surrounded by young deck-hands from a towboat, let his hairy, fat right hand be nursing a glass of beer, his left thumb stuck in his vest, the fingers of that hand playing with the enormous gold watch chain that garlanded his great belly—then, my lads, the grand old days of the sternwheeler on the Columbia came to life!

Was his story true? Who gave a damn? It made pictures. It had the smell of life. It sounded well. . . .

II

SPUD HAWLEY belonged to that rare race of men born with two mighty talents. So born, he had two inner necessities, and they were bound to war with one another for complete fulfillment when they were both aroused. The talent for cooking, which was to triumph in his later life, was dormant all through his lusty youth. Then his talent for river-smelling reigned supreme. The story of its final subjugation by his cooking talent was the great story of Spud Hawley's life. In that Homeric soul-conflict a famous galley chief gained glory, but at a tragic cost—the burial of all

that his youth had counted as noble and heroic. Small wonder that Spud Hawley salted his beer with tears as he told his tale.

He began his steamboating career on the Ohio River when he was a mere youth. He shortly became a mate, for his recognition of the various and distinct smells that a river exhales throughout its course astounded old river pilots and captains from the first. Steamboating began to recede into the past on the Ohio and the Mississippi after the Civil War, however, so young Hawley, with his one superbly functioning talent and his other dormant one, emigrated to the Great River of the West. On the Columbia steamboating was just beginning to flourish. It was unimaginable that anything could stop him from becoming a pilot and captain there.

In less than a year he was a mate. That was a marvelous rise for one so young in years and so young in the life of the great river. It was his river-smelling talent that brought him so rapidly to this position and to early fame.

A river commander could have no greater gift. His craft had to be kept in a certain channel, as surely as a wagon had to be kept to the grade of a mountain road. Every turn and twist of the channel had to be known to the man in charge of a river boat. In fog, darkness or storm the pilot born was guided by a mysterious sense. Some pilots declared that a river had innumerable sounds, that a new note would arise from its surface every few yards. They were ear pilots; they steered by hearing. Other pilots—they were the rare, famous kind—declared that a river exhaled odors, that it lifted a fresh one at every change of the channel. These were nose pilots; they steered by smell. Young Hawley was, beyond a doubt, the greatest born

river-smeller that ever lived. At the end of his first year on the great river he was familiar with every smell of the Snake and Columbia Rivers, from Lewiston, Idaho, to the tempestuous bar on the Pacific. Command loomed ahead.

Mate Hawley did not go without honor. His fists were of more service to him in that post than his richly endowed nose, and they had always served him capably. Once on the Ohio he whipped seven negro deck-hands with six blows of his fists; for the seventh leaped over the rail and swam out of danger before the smashing young mate got to him. Mate Hawley exhibited the same manly qualities on the Columbia, and ere long was "Bully" Hawley to all the steamboat men on the great river.

Two more years, and Bully Hawley was a full-fledged pilot and already famous for his river-smelling. The post of captain, grandest star in Columbia River steamboating, was beaming rays of promise above his horizon. Ere its full light could burst upon him his other talent, dormant and unrealized for so long, was awakened by incidents of misfortune.

III

IN THE WINTER of 1877 Bully Hawley was pilot of the *Star of the Rapids*, a famous Upper River stern-wheeler captained by the most narrow-minded and sarcastic commander on the river, Russ Spangler. The *Star* and two other sternwheelers were tied up above Celilo Falls when the river was frozen in late December. The captains and crews were held on the boats, so that they could resume their schedule as soon as the ice broke. At Christmas all three captains left for Portland, to enjoy a holiday celebration. They were

less than three hours away when a message arrived from General John Gibbon, army commander at Walla Walla, stating that the Nez Percé Indians were on the warpath, and asking that a steamboat be sent full-speed to Wallula Landing, where troops could be loaded for transport to the Nez Percé country.

Bully Hawley at once made ready for a start with Cap Spangler's sternwheeler. The ice had begun to move, in cakes so close together that the black winter water hardly showed between them. Pilot Hawley and the *Star* left Celilo at night. A blizzard was roaring down the mammoth gorge. The smash of ice made a thudding roar along the sides of the *Star*. All was deep, roaring darkness ahead of the pilot house. Hawley could not even see the bow of his craft. He did not need to see it. The storm and darkness could not banish the river smells. The pilot knew them all. He could shut his eyes and keep the channel. Through the stormy night, through the torrent of black water and the sledging ice cakes he steered the *Star*, and not a treacherous bend deceived him, not a bar was touched, not a needle rock was grazed.

On through the calmer stretches of the Upper River the *Star* churned surely ahead. On through the black, roaring, rock-strewn waters of Biggs, Indian and Hellgate Rapids, and the fists that gripped the wheel spokes never faltered once, so truly did the nose above them smell the course. . . . Bully Hawley's heart thumped with triumph and hope as the winter sky whitened in dawn. He saw the gold of captain's stripes glittering on his sleeve. . . .

But he was wearied out. Every muscle ached. The storm had driven its freezing blasts through the walls of the pilot house and he shivered with cold. He was sick of the river smells. So, with a twelve-mile stretch

of quiet water ahead, he left the wheel in charge of the mate and went below to have his favorite breakfast of hot cakes and gravy. Revived by the warmth of the dining-room, he had a nose only for the aroma that wafted to him from the steam of the coffee pot, for the odors that arose from the hot bubbles in the bowl of gravy, for the tickling fragrance that spoke so eloquently of the crispness and flavor of the hot cakes, stacked eleven high on the plate before him. With warmth about him now, with all these perfumes swimming into his nose, Bully Hawley did not think of the river smells; he utterly forgot the river itself, its perils, even this craft under his command, the stern-wheeled *Star of the Rapids*.

Always a man of etiquette, Bully Hawley first tucked a napkin under his chin. Then he poured a cup of coffee, and sugared and creamed it. The ceremonies concluded, he was ready for the actual business of breakfasting. He bent over the tower of hot cakes. He lifted the gravy bowl with his left hand. His right embraced the ladle; his mouth began to water as he dipped and lifted, and breathed all the rich odors of the dish, so keenly saw every bubble winking, every pepper speck swimming; he tilted the ladle, and a rich, creamy stream descended upon the brown, crisp, smoking layers of the tower before him; and then, just as all the juices of his body were rising to their highest tide, to receive and honor food and its flavors—calamity!

The *Star* stopped with a smashing suddenness that hurled him violently against the table and at the same time jerked the gravy bowl from his hand and with miraculous aim set it neatly over his head. The pilot was then a smear of scalding gravy from his hair to his knees, but he never lost his wits. Without even

removing the bowl, without even pausing to wipe his face, he leaped from the table, lunged out of the dining cabin, and rushed up to the pilot house. He had no sense for anything now but the river smells. Even before he reached the deck he smelled a needle rock. His nose was true to him still. The mate, bewildered by the storm that still raged, had left the *Star* drift off the course set for him by the pilot. The *Star* had run on to a needle rock, it had pierced her bottom, and now it held her, solid and still. Pilot Hawley saw at once that she could not be floated until high water. His presence of mind did not desert him. The mate forgot the calamity and laughed when he saw his chief all splashed with gravy and wearing a gravy bowl on his head. Bully Hawley knocked the mate down, descended at once to the galley, removed the gravy bowl, wiped his clothes, washed his face, returned to the table, and ordered the cook to prepare some fresh hot cakes and gravy. He ate them with serene enjoyment, not realizing that this was the beginning of the end for his river-smelling talent.

When Cap Spangler reached the wreck in another steamboat, he at once revealed that he had the authority to break Bully Hawley as a river pilot. This he proceeded to do, in the style that pleased his nature.

"You like hot cakes and gravy, Mr. Hawley," he said. "Very well. I don't want it said that I hounded a man off the river. I need a cook. It's something of a comedown to go from piloting to cooking. At least it would be so regarded by most pilots. You, however, have such a passion for hot cakes and gravy that you are apt to call it a promotion. Very well. You are promoted to cook. Now you can have all the hot cakes and gravy you want. There'll be no limit."

Was Bully Hawley thrown into a rage by this in-

tended insult? Did he make a fool of himself by bowing his head in shame? Not much! Bully Hawley got his revenge for having his pilot's papers taken from him by calmly accepting the new post, accepting it as though it were actually a promotion.

Then, to his great surprise, and to the mortification of Cap Spangler and all other envious rivermen, his dormant talent came to life and brought him more glory than even his river-smelling had won. He discovered that he was a born cook. Soon he had a better standing among steamboat owners than any of the pilots and captains; the superb quality of his cooking made him the most renowned steamboat man on the river. No owner would hear of him going back to the pilot house, and he had no desire to go. Fame came to him in the galleys, large wages, also, and he had all the hot cakes and gravy he desired. It was misfortune, but it was beautiful. Other misfortunes were to befall; and they, too, were to prove not altogether an agony to bear.

IV

AS SPUD HAWLEY, cook, he was the chief ornament of the great years of the sternwheeler in the late seventies and the early eighties. He lived high through it all and he loved it all. Feeding his delectable and meaty concoctions to the passengers on the *Thompson* and the *Wide West*, he really made the reputations of those famous sternwheelers. He was chief cook on the *Thompson* when she shot the Cascades in '82, after the completion of the O. R. & N. R. R. He had the same position on the *Hassalo* when that sternwheeler made her sensational Cascades run in '88. And he was the chief cook of the second *Telephone*,

when that racing sternwheeler was beating the *Olympian*, the high-toned steel sidewheeler, nearly every trip on the Ilwaco run. And no one else but Spud Hawley was the chief cook on Captain Russ Spangler's *Belle of the Bends* in '96, when she raced the new *Forest Queen* for the first time from Portland to The Dalles. That was the time of his great triumph over Cap Spangler.

The new government locks through the Cascades were ready for traffic in November, 1896. Before that time Lower River and Middle River traffic connected through a five-mile portage railroad. With a clear run through the new locks to The Dalles, river steamboating, which the railroads had been killing off, revived. The *Forest Queen* was built to compete with the *Belle of the Bends* on the Portland-The Dalles run.

The whole river celebrated the day the new locks were opened. The next morning the old *Belle* and the new *Queen* were steamed up at nine o'clock, ready to race away from the Portland docks and down the Willamette to the Columbia. Each sternwheeler was carrying a full list of passengers, but no freight. Both Cap Spangler and the *Queen's* owners had advertised a two-bit fare. That meant a large loss. But so does any war. Cap Spangler cast his last deft in a speech from the pilot house. He announced that if the *Belle* was beaten in this first race to The Dalles, at the end of the run his purser would stand at the gangplank, a sack of silver quarters in his hands, and the fare of every debarking passenger would be returned. There was a riot of cheers in response to the speech. Cap Spangler strutted in his gold braid like the king of creation.

In spite of the rainy November weather there were large crowds on the docks. Handkerchiefs were waved

and excited shouts arose from the throngs as the hour of departure drew near. White woodsmoke was rolling from the stacks of both sternwheelers. The gang-planks were hauled up. The passengers jammed the decks on the shore side and shouted and waved at the dock crowds. Down below deck-hands heaved wood to the firemen and the sweating firemen crammed the dry sticks into the fireboxes. Chief Babbidge, the *Belle's* engineer, stood by his levers, looking from his watch to his firemen, from them to his gauge and injector, from them back to his watch; and he constantly closed and opened his fists as though his fingers were itching, and he gnawed his stubby gray mustache all the while. . . . The *Belle's* whistle boomed to cast off and in a second sounded for the opening of the Steel Bridge draw. The *Queen* cast off at the same time. Her dock was below the *Belle's*, so she was first through the bridge.

Spud Hawley had been out on deck, taking in every move, to be sure that all was well. Satisfied that the *Belle* would be safe in Cap Spangler's charge until she swung up the river from Vancouver, he returned to his galley, sharpened his butcher knife and cleaver, began operating on a prime quarter of beef, issued orders to the second cook and the flunkies, made all his preparations to cook and serve the noblest and completest dinner that Columbia River steamboating, Lower, Upper, or Middle, had ever known.

The galley range was jammed with steaming and hissing kettles; hams of young, corn-fed pork were roasting in the ovens; soon fat potatoes would be baking themselves into crisp-jacketed food, mealy and hot, in there, and beside them pans of the richest biscuits would be fluffing and browning. On the range top would bubble the juice of T bone and porterhouse

steaks, while cream gravy thickened, and all steamed tickling smells. The second cook was starting the parsnips, roasting ears and string beans in the kettles. The pantry shelves were already lined with pumpkin pies, their open, freckled faces all golden smiles. Here was dinner enough to fully occupy any cook's mind. So Spud Hawley worked lovingly over it, almost forgetting the river. Not even on the old *Wide West* had he ever started a more heroic dinner for passengers made starvation-hungry by the fresh river air.

The two sternwheelers churned on. On down the Willamette. On across the great river to Vancouver on the Washington shore. Spud Hawley was absorbed in his dinner preparations now. Hearing the hiss and purr of hot, loaded kettles, he forgot to listen to the chugging of the twin engines and the rumble of the sternwheel. The fragrance the ovens exhaled made him forget the river smells. The talent that had once made him so famous as a pilot was smothered in the vision of the triumph that was to be his when the *Belle's* passengers sat before portions that would enchant the palate of a king. The vision grew so bright that a vast, dense fog rolling up the Columbia did not darken the galley for Spud Hawley when it swept over the *Belle of the Bends*. Until the two sternwheelers left the Vancouver landing the chief of the galley had no premonition of the misfortune that was to befall, the misfortune that was to bring to its fullest bloom a half-forgotten talent and pride.

V

THE TWO STERNWHEELERS left Vancouver side by side. From there to Camas Landing it was straight, open racing through a fog that thickened and dark-

ened every minute. Cap Spangler from the pilot house could not see past the rail of the *Belle*. But his talented and trained ears could hear the *Forest Queen* racing close and fast. Cap Spangler was of the order of pilots who run through darkness or fog by ear. Fog muffled the river sounds, but still Cap Spangler could hear them all. He heard every note from the shores, the rocks, the bars. The old *Belle* shivered and groaned as he kept her at full speed ahead. But she did not leave the *Queen* behind.

"Old Cap Spangler," boasted the second cook to a waiter, "can steer a sternwheeler through hell blindfolded and bring her to dock at the pearly gates!"

Hearing that, Spud Hawley slowly became aware of the fog. He was stirring the parsnips then, holding the lid of the great kettle aloft in his left hand so that moisture dripped from it and sputtered on the hot range lids, and gripping the long handle of a large stirring spoon in his right hand and circling it among the bubbling parsnips, while he contentedly breathed the fragrance that steamed up from the kettle's depths. Hearing the ignorant boast of the second cook, he paused in the midst of this pleasant activity and turned his head. Steam from the parsnips drifted up and around a motionless spoon handle and the kettle lid was suspended from his left hand while Spud Hawley stared through the galley window at the fog. Already it was clammy and dark, heavy and thick, and it promised to become the dreadfullest muffling fog the great river had ever known.

Spud Hawley felt a painful stir in his breast. It was strange at first—then he was flushed with the emotion of recognition—and then his nose quivered. It was smitten with the river smells! That talent which had been the pride of his youth, that talent so long sub-

dued, was mysteriously aroused, and for the moment it mastered him.

"Maybe he could," said Spud Hawley to the second cook. "Maybe Cap Spangler could steer through hell blindfolded. But hell ain't the big river. Not by a long shot! You watch Cap Spangler if this fog gets worse. Just watch him! He's an ear pilot, Cap Spangler is, and if this fog gets to be the daddy of all the fogs it'll smother the river sounds, and then where'll he be? It'll take a nose pilot to steer the old *Belle* then. And where's they a nose pilot on the big river these days? You tell me!"

Of course he didn't expect the second cook to answer. Everybody on the river had forgotten that the famous steamboat cook was once just as famous for his river-smelling. So the second cook only grinned sheepishly, and Spud Hawley turned back to his pars-nips. Then the fight between his two talents began.

He first realized it when he came out of a sort of daze and noticed that he was gripping the handle of the stirring spoon as though it were a wheel spoke, while the river smells that penetrated the galley were claiming the entire attention of his nose. They drew him to the galley door. He smelled the cooking dinner no longer. For the moment he was Spud Hawley no more; he was Bully Hawley again, nosing his way up a channel, steering straightly and surely by the river smells.

The fog increased, and the thicker and blacker it grew the more it aroused his long-slumbering smelling powers. When the *Belle* steamed away from the wood dock at Washougal Landing she glided like a dead boat into the channel, for the rumble and the slosh of her sternwheel were smothered in the fog. Man and boy, Spud Hawley had run on the Columbia River for

twenty-five years, and never before had he seen a fog so crawly, wet, slimy, smothery, mucky, clammy, pervading, oppressive, dismal and black. The *Belle's* passengers were hushed and awed. Motionless, they huddled in chairs and waited for they knew not what. Some felt that their craft had been lifted from the river in the bowels of a thundercloud. Some felt that they were sinking slowly into a mysterious abyss of the earth. The fog was supernatural, hell-like, and silencing in its silence. Even the waiters and deck-hands failed to pass the time-honored remarks about the fog being so thick you could taste it, or cut chunks out of it with a knife. The chugging of the *Belle's* twin engines sounded like the faint, faraway drone of a bee. Not a sound penetrated the burdensome blackness to indicate the whereabouts of the *Forest Queen*.

Spud Hawley had utterly deserted the dinner. His mind, heart and nose were given entirely to the *Belle* and the fog. Something must happen soon. No ear pilot could now hear the river sounds. He waited, smelling the channel from the galley door. And something happened. The channel was lost.

The *Belle* slowed down, stopped, drifted back downstream. Only Spud Hawley, of all the passengers and rivermen on board, realized the drift, for the others had lost consciousness of motion. Spud Hawley knew the drift by the river smells. He smelled hard; then, suddenly, he held his breath. The *Belle* shivered and shook, reeled and rocked—and Spud Hawley smelled her traveling upstream again! He knew what had happened. The *Queen*, still running in the fog, had side-swiped the *Belle*, locked guards with her, and kept steaming ahead. The two big sternwheelers were in a fighting clinch. Cap Tucker of the *Queen* and Cap Spangler were ready to battle, even in this overpower-

ing fog, even though each pilot house was entirely hidden from the other. Guards locked, the two stern-wheelers plowed on, out of the channel and in a darkness that was as black as the shadows of the moon. . . .

"Ain't you forgettin' to season the parsnips, chief?" the second cook bawled in his ear.

Spud Hawley did not reply. The river smells were pulling him irresistibly to the pilot house. The stirring spoon and the lid of the parsnip kettle dropped from his hands. The fog was so dense by now that the utensils floated to the floor as lightly as feathers. Spud Hawley lowered his head and bored through the fog toward the pilot house ladder. . . .

VI

IN THE dismal, clammy shadows of the pilot house Cap Spangler was a figure like grim death as he clutched the wheel and steered, he didn't know where, and he didn't give a damn, so long as he held his own with the *Forest Queen*. Spud Hawley realized at once that he was a deaf ear pilot now; not a sound was rising through the tremendous muffling fog. But there were smells; clammy and bitter they were, but still the river smells.

"I smell a bar ahead!" he bawled in Cap Spangler's ear. "You're a-headin' to scrape that bar with your port side!"

And the *Belle* scraped that bar! Without shouting a word, Cap Spangler stepped aside, and Spud Hawley, his nose as powerful and ardent as ever it was in his lusty youth, took the wheel. There he stood, hidden from all but the close gaze of the envious, sarcastic and narrow-minded captain, Russ Spangler. There he

stood, Bully Hawley again! The rarest river-smeller that ever steered a sternwheeler through the channels of the Great River of the West was at the wheel of the *Belle of the Bends*!

He had not steered far, swerving the boat back toward the channel smells, when the sharp odor of a needle rock pierced the fog ahead of him. The *Queen* still had her guards locked with the *Belle's*, and Cap Tucker, who was also an ear pilot, was blindly following his rival's course. Spud Hawley determined to lose the *Queen* here and make victory certain for the *Belle of the Bends* in the race to the Locks.

Smelling the needle rock, he steered so as to head the rival craft directly for its point. Cap Tucker, blindly holding his boat against the *Belle*, innocently let himself be driven onto the needle rock by the master river-smeller. The *Queen* crashed silently, and hung. Pilot Hawley sheered off just in time to escape a wreck. The *Belle* sideswiped the rock, shook and swayed, then righted herself, and plowed on through the black fog. Hawley's heart thumped with mighty pride. The position of years was utterly out of his mind. If some one had told him then and there that the grand dinner which was to have been his greatest triumph as a galley chief was now only a mass of hot garbage on the galley floor, heaved there by a side-swipe on the needle rock, not a tremor of pain would have crossed his mind. He was the river-smeller now, heart, soul and nose; he was Bully Hawley alone, the supreme pilot of the great river, smelling his course through muffling blackness as no other pilot could smell. All of the forces of his being were centered in his incomparable nose.

On and on Pilot Hawley smelled the *Belle of the Bends*. Through the muffling blackness of the dread-

fulest fog that ever descended on the great river he steered the *Belle* without once erring in his course. On to Castle Rock, on across the tail of the Cascades to the Locks, on up the great river until the thousand-foot walls of its mountain gorge began to loom in a thinning fog. The river lifted its sounds again. Then, without a word of thanks to the river-smeller, Cap Spangler resumed the wheel, to steer by ear.

"Looky here, Cap," growled the voice of Bully Hawley, "I'm the only man on the river who could a brung the *Belle* through that fog. Do I get my pilot's papers back, or don't I get 'em?"

The envious and narrow-minded captain did not reply.

"Looky here, cap, I been satisfied to be a famous cook, but this here bust of river-smellin' has brung back all the old times. I yearn to be the man I used to be, the most famous smeller on the river. How about them pilot's papers, Cap Spangler?"

Cap Spangler did not reply.

"Looky here, cap. I know you're mean, but she don't go. You can't get around it. When I tell 'em who smelled the *Belle* through this daddy of all the fogs, what'll you say?"

The envious and narrow-minded captain did not turn his head, but he spoke at last, in his most sarcastic snarl.

"Nobody *seen* you smell the *Belle* through that fog. Nobody could. What'll I say? I'll say you was drunk on vaniller extract and run off and left the dinner spile and had a bughouse dream. That's what I'll say! Get back to yer galley, Spud Hawley!"

The galley! And now Spud Hawley's cooking talent roused up with blood in its eye and the powerful struggle in his soul began. His smelling talent raged.

"What! You a-goin' to throw me down and tuck me away after all I done in this fog?" it seemed to say. "You never are, Bully Hawley! You're a-goin' to throw off that shameful cook's cap and apron, pile 'em on the floor, jump on 'em, crack yer heels together, and then smack this envious, narrer-minded, sarcastic captain in the eye with yer doubled-up fist—that's what you're a goin' to do, Bully Hawley! He bowed you down once, and you took it—but not this time, Bully Hawley! You're goin' to bring him to taw! You're goin' to get yer pilot's papers back and go on smellin' the big river till you die! Be yerself, Bully Hawley!"

And his cooking talent roared back:

"Don't be a fool, Spud Hawley! What's river-smellin', anyway? Why, after all the satisfaction of fixin' up a grand and wonderful meal, after the beauty of seein' people stuff themselves with dishes that you and nobody but you could cook, after gettin' the name you have of bein' the star galley chief on the big river, havin' a fame that a dozen pilots put together couldn't match, why you'd be a *fool* to go back to river-smellin' agin! What's river-smellin' anyway? Who appreciates it? Maybe Cap Spangler does, but he's too envious, narrer-minded and sarcastic to admit it. Ever' other pilot and captain is the same. But you find anybody who doesn't appreciate a wonderful meal—you find just one! . . ."

The voice of the cooking talent descended to a low, coaxing seductive tone:

"Think of that fine dinner you've got goin' down in the galley now. You can bet they won't be a passenger on this boat but what'll remember it so long as he lives. But you ask any of 'em about this fog; and what'll they say? No more'n this:

"'Yeh, it was about the worst fog I ever saw. Oh, sure, the boat come through all right. There was nothin' to that. What was fine about the trip was the dinner. If you want a dinner that *is* a dinner, just take a trip on the *Belle of the Bends*.'

"That's what they'll say."

"They will like hell!" snapped the smelling talent.

"You show me differ'nt then," growled the cooking talent.

So the soul-struggle went on. Poor Hawley could not decide. It was Cap Spangler who really made the decision. He turned his head again.

"You here yet? Don't you know it's dang nigh dinnertime?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, this ain't the galley, is it?"

"No, sir."

Spud Hawley turned to the ladder. The cooking talent had won.

VII

BUT it had won only to meet its greatest trial, just as the river-smelling talent had awakened only to meet heroic demands. For ruin met Spud Hawley's eyes as he entered the galley door. Not only had the kettles of vegetables been hurled from the range and their contents heaped on the galley floor, but the second cook and the waiters had gone to sleep when the fog reached its deepest blackness, a blackness that was deeper than any night, as deep as the shadows of the moon. While they slept the pork hams and baking potatoes and biscuits had burned to a crisp. It was a holocaust. The dinner, so grandly planned and so ardently prepared, was no more. Yet the passengers

must be superbly fed. If not, the reputation of Spud Hawley, the galley chief, would be ruined forever.

For a moment he felt utterly hopeless. His smelling talent revived, and urged him to give up the galley, to quit it now and set his hopes on the pilot house. Certainly the dinner was hopeless; and certainly it would be disaster if he attempted to serve it now. His cooking talent dolefully admitted that, yet it would not yield. It struggled to keep its power, and out of the struggle an idea emerged, one that fired Spud Hawley, the cook, with new purpose.

His gaze swept over the second cook and the waiters. They were still yawning and sleepy-eyed, appearing as though they had just got up in the early morning for breakfast. Spud Hawley strode from his galley. He waddled rapidly down the deck. He held his breath as he peered through a window of the passenger cabin. Then he sighed with relief. Every passenger was yawning and sleepy-eyed! They were not awakening from the night, but they were awakening from the fog, and certainly they would all desire nothing but a breakfast meal! Why, thought Spud Hawley excitedly, it was the finest luck in the world that the grand dinner was destroyed! Who in the world wanted to eat a grand, heavy dinner right after a hearty sleep? Nobody! What they wanted—what they wanted was nothing else in the world but hot cakes and gravy!

Spud Hawley's cooking talent swelled with such joy that it was near to breaking through his ribs. Heretofore he had only been famous for his dinners and suppers, except among the deck-hands, for it was only deck-hands that he fed for breakfast. They had exalted his hot cakes and gravy to the skies, and there had been times when his hot cakes had so nearly at-

tained hot-cake perfection that the whole crew had stuffed themselves to such a degree that they had to be carried from the dining-room; but then deckhands were humble men and they couldn't spread a cook's fame. Now, after so long a time, he had the chance to win as much fame for his breakfasts as he ever had for his suppers and dinners.

The river-smelling talent was entirely subjugated by the time Spud Hawley was back in the galley door. Rousing orders roared out of his burly chest and trumpeted through the galley, shaking pots and pans on the walls, and stirring the second cook and the waiters with bustling life.

"Make way!" roared Spud Hawley. "Make way fer the mightiest hot cakes and gravy cook that ever was! Come on, ye hellions, and swab the galley floor! Roll the coal into the range, my hearty second man! You, Arthur, lift the lids and lay the griddles! You, Joe, roll out a fresh barrel of flour! You, Mike, fetch the round brown gravy bowls and the long-handle' ladles! I want cans of sweet milk, pitchers of sweet cream, I want shakers of pepper and salt, I want cases of eggs fer richness and a jar of pork juice fer shortenin'! Grease the griddles, men, get the gravy kittle to smokin'! Heat up the chiny platters fer stacks of the brownest, crispest, lightest, flakiest, tastiest hot cakes that ever was! Heat up the round brown bowls fer the drippin'est, bubbliest, pepper-specked gravy that ever made a hot-cake lover roll his eyes with joy as he wallered fine breakfast flavors around in his mouth until they descended fer his innards' comfort and peace! Come on, you men! Let the range fire roar! Spud Hawley's makin' the reppitation of his life to-day!"

He fell silent then, but the galley was full of life

and sound. The white-aproned forms of the second cook and the waiters darted hither and yon; pans and kettles clattered and banged; the fire crackled, snarled and finally roared as it flamed around fresh coal; platters and bowls rattled off the shelves; Spud Hawley's huge white arms flashed over his tables, barrels, shelves and bins, as he dipped, shook, measured, sieved and stirred; and at last the cooking hot cakes browned, bubbled and smoked on their griddles, and the gravy kettles exuded a steam of unsurpassed fragrance. Spud Hawley looked at his watch.

"She's dinnertime. Serve 'em the breakfast, men," he said.

The fog had thinned considerably at the time the gong was struck, yet lights were burning in the dining cabin. The passengers yawned and rubbed sleepy eyes as they took their places. They knew it was noon, but morning was in their blood. Every stomach was in revolt at the notion of eating the heavy roasted and stewed food of a grand steamboat dinner. But nobody ventured to complain. It was dinnertime, and anything else but dinner was hardly to be expected.

Imagine, then, the exclamations of surprise and delight which arose from all the tables when the waiters appeared bearing vast platters of hot cakes and round brown bowls of gravy! The passengers could hardly believe their sleepy eyes. Here the desire for breakfast had been so strong in every one; and here it was as though some good fairy had read their wishes and graciously granted them. Every passenger smiled.

Of course their surprise and delight were immeasurably increased when Spud Hawley's incomparable hot cakes and gravy were savored. Nobody could hope to describe the pleasure with which the surprised and delighted passengers ate their unexpected second

breakfast of the day. At first they began to eat as though the hot cakes were just ordinary good ones and as though the gravy was just ordinary good gravy, too. That is, they lifted mouthfuls on their forks and began to chew. But eventually they discovered that chewing Spud Hawley's hot cakes and gravy was not only unnecessary; the act even impaired the glorious flavors.

Eventually they ate as his hot cakes and gravy should be eaten. That is, they lifted forkfuls, inserted them, then closed their lips, leaned their heads backward, closed their eyes, kept their jaws motionless, and sat in absolute quiet, with angelic smiles on their faces, while the hot cakes and gravy dissolved in their own delicious flavors, and trickled down their eaters' throats.

It was a beautiful sight to Spud Hawley, as he sat in his padded chair by the open galley door, smoked his pipe and watched the passengers eat his hot cakes and gravy. A hundred forks, topped by gravy-doused squares of flaky brown hot cake, would rise at once, the squares would disappear and the unburdened forks descend in unison, then a hundred heads would lean back, a hundred angelic smiles would appear and glow for a full minute, then the heads would be lowered again, and eyes would open to gaze delightedly on the remaining hot cakes and gravy in the hundred plates. . . . Oh, but it was beautiful and true! No cooking talent on earth had ever enjoyed a more satisfying triumph.

Of course Cap Spangler, envious, narrow-minded and sarcastic as ever, had to snarl at his cook:

"I might of known it! I might of known you'd do it some trip or another! Servin' a breakfast at dinner-time! That's you all over, Spud Hawley!"

"Yes, cap, it is," was all Spud Hawley deigned to reply.

So Spud Hawley enjoyed the spectacle in modest quiet; resting in his padded chair, puffing peacefully on his pipe. He was supremely satisfied, utterly content. Life could hold no more for him. This day he had lived it all.

VIII

AND so Spud Hawley talked peacefully and contentedly about his past as he told his story to the young deck-hands of a later day in the Club Saloon. He had no bitterness in his heart whatever, he said. Life had taught him it was his fate to be unhonored and unsung. Even so, on one great day he had proved to his own satisfaction and pride that he was the chief cook and the star river-smeller on the Great River of the West. He had that glory to tell. . . .

And under the soft lights and over the foaming glasses in that rivermen's rendezvous glory shone and rang in his tale. Spud Hawley was a true bard of his time.

JERKLINE

I

FORTY men were breakfasting from vast platters of ham and eggs, mountainous stacks of hot cakes, and gallon pots of strong, steaming coffee on the rough tables of the Freighters' Rest Hotel. The reflectors of bracket lamps threw light over lean, weather-browned faces that bulged from too-generous mouthfuls of grub. Tough, hairy hands parted mustaches, lifted steaming cups, balanced halves of eggs on knives and thrust them out of sight, sliced off slabs of butter to make a golden spread on plate-size hot cakes, and held knives and forks upright, like swords at salute, when words were to be said or speech heard. There was, unusually, almost as much sound of talk as of eating at the Freighters' Rest breakfast table this morning.

"Yay, Blacksnake Baker, what's the matter of your brags this mornin'? Don't you still feel lucky when yer shed of redeye?"

"Why rub it into Blacksnake? King Bolt ain't sayin' nothin' neither!"

"Hell, he never does talk, unless he's got a king bolt in his hand."

"You'll let the cards talk for you, hey, King Bolt?"

"Reckon his hosses'll do some talkin', too. Damn, I'd give five hunderd fer that jerkline leader of his'n."

"Ain't no purtier'n Blacksnake's."

"Yeah, but Blacksnake ain't never pulled Tight

Bottom Hill yet. He don't have any idy of this yere doby road."

"Hell, roads is roads, and freightin' is freightin', wheresomever you go."

"I tell you a freighter needs to *know* Tight Bottom to pull it right. King Bolt's got a cinch."

"Well, pardner, I freighted with Blacksnake Baker up in the Seven Devils and I know his poker luck. He'll have King Bolt, outfit and all, afore they've crossed Shaniko Flat."

"Like hell! Blacksnake'll be lucky to land in Prineville with his drawers left, or even his socks!"

The two freighters concerned were silent under all this conversation. Blacksnake Baker parted his huge mustache, stroked his vast, flowing black beard, and said nothing. King Bolt Jack parted his long brown mustache, rubbed his smooth chin, drank his coffee, and said nothing. But both men looked knowing and serious. They were probably thinking pessimistically how hard it is to live up to a powerful reputation.

Both had been young freighters on the Santa Fé Trail, in the old days of the Major & Waddell wagon trains. Both had pioneered with the mule outfits on the Overland Trail, hauling supplies over the Nevada desert to Virginia City. But never had they been in the same train. They had worked all the other famous freighting trails of the old West, but never together. The fame of both spread among the jerkline men; legends flowered about their supreme cunning and might in the freighter's arts—the selection and training of young horses for a jerkline string, the power to wind an outfit safely down a steep and treacherous mountain grade or to worm it through a stretch of doby mud, the ability to win at stud-poker in the station games and to sample whisky from the barrels

of whisky that made so large a part of every old Western freighting cargo. Freighters built saloon arguments on the deeds of the two men. Gorgeous whoppers bloomed about them. . . .

"Why, sir, up in the Bitter Roots, I saw Blacksnake Baker try out a swing hoss, a sorrel he was, and *sech* a bucker! First time Blacksnake harnessed him he bucked off harness, hide and all! Yes, sir, and it was winter, and there he stood—Vernie was his name—there that sorrel Vernie stood in the winter wind, with no more hide on him than I got on my eye! There stood Blacksnake, bustin' blue cusswords over him for all he was worth, but Vernie *knew* what a heart his driver had. A smart hoss always does. So Vernie sidled up to Blacksnake, shiverin', the pore cretur, and gazin' with the most *appealin'* look into Blacksnake's eyes. Well, sir, still cussin' a blue streak, Blacksnake got out his thread, needle and wax and sewed the hoss's hide back on so slick you couldn't even tell where the stitches was! And Vernie was so grateful he turned into the best leader Blacksnake ever had. That's how Blacksnake Baker got along with hosses."

"That reminds me of the time King Bolt Jack made the first trip into a new Sawtooth minin' camp. He come to a crick that looked small and harmless, so he plowed right on through. Dag-nabbed if the water wasn't so powerful with alum that it was the *shrink-in'est* stuff you *ever* heerd of! The hoofs of all his hosses shrunk to the size of clothespin heads and the wagon wheels to the size of tomater can lids. I'd like to know what Blacksnake Baker would do in a fix like that! King Bolt Jack warn't buffaloed none. He went out and picked him up a half dozen gunny sackfuls of rattlesnakes, and set 'em to bitin' the hoofs and wheels till they was swelled up to their natcheral size

agin. I seen his outfit right afterwards, and I couldn't tell it had been through a thing. There was his team—Frontus and Backus was his wheelers' names, and Fiddle and Horn his leaders'—and their hoofs was nacheral as life. There now!"

Thus Blacksnake Baker and King Bolt Jack were made to be heroic rivals long before they actually met to battle for supremacy on The Dalles to Prineville road. For five years now King Bolt Jack had been the star of that trail. This spring Blacksnake Baker had rolled into The Dalles, driving a superb ten-up team and three wagons, new and shining. He had broken them in on the Condon trail, then secured a Prineville contract. At last he and King Bolt Jack were to make a trip in the same train.

"I'm shore feelin' lucky this trip!"

Blacksnake Baker bawled that at King Bolt Jack when breakfast was done in the Freighters' Rest Hotel.

"Blacksnake Baker," said the star freighter of The Dalles to Prineville road, "I can drive my ten-up where you couldn't get down on yore hands and knees and drag a halter rope!"

Homeric legend faded before reality. A battle long hoped for was on. The two supreme heroes of the freight trails were to fight it out!

II

THE MORNING DARK was just beginning to dissolve when King Bolt Jack, helped by a feedyard roustabout, led his ten harnessed horses from the mangers to the water trough of the Hippodrome feedyard. The rainy weather of the last few days had cleared the night before and the daybreaking smells were keen

with frost. The two men were chewing tobacco heartily as they led the teams. Every horse was a creature of individuality. Cal, a fat, elderly swinghorse, stubbed along, with his tail half-raised, as though he'd forgotten to put it back into place after once lifting it, with his head hanging in a thoughtful look at the ground. Both Turtle and Dove, two young broncho mare swingers, were switching their tails furiously and tossing their heads indignantly, not yet being reconciled to the morning feel of the collar. Blossom, the other swinger, was dragging on the halter chain, her chin stuck out, her eyes rolling, making a perfect picture of broncho meanness. Notion, tall and rangy partner of the wise and hefty Toler'ble on the wheel, had his head up and was gazing far out and away, as though he knew there was a barrel of oats about a mile off; and so Notion shoved hard against the horses ahead of him, making one of them step on King Bolt Jack's heels. Then the freighter unlimbered his swearing apparatus for the first time that morning.

There was one of the outfit who walked beautifully from the manger to the trough. Her name was Banner, and, lads, she was the proudest and brightest creature that ever feasted your eyes! A full-chested, arch-necked, silk-coated iron gray who waved a long black mane and tail and rolled at you the shiniest orbs! Beautiful was Banner, King Bolt Jack's jerkline leading mare, beautiful, proud and wise, and just wicked enough to keep Hondo, her woolly-coated brown mate, in his place with a curl of her pretty black muzzle and a flash of her white teeth.

At the trough the horses drank until they began to muzzle the water, then it was a jingle of harness and chains and yells of, "Step over there, Bloss-

som, you show-me bitch!" and, "Back into that britchin', Cal, you jug-head devil!" until the spans were hooked up. The wheelers were neckyoked to the tongue of the first wagon. A thick iron rod swung below the tongue, and a heavy chain ran from it to the bars of the pointers, the two swing teams, and the leaders. Each span was under the restraint of check straps and jockey sticks. The jerkline ran from Banner's bit back to the saddle on Notion, the near wheeler. From that saddle King Bolt Jack drove his team, a blacksnake coiled over his shoulders, the jerkline and the rope that controlled the brakes of his three wagons in his hands.

As the outfit started, Blacksnake Baker brought his teams from the barn.

"Feelin' luckier every minute!" he bawled through his whiskers.

The lordly swing of his long outfit through the feedyard gate was King Bolt Jack's only reply.

By sunup his wagons were loaded with bacon, beans, flour, canned tomatoes, cases of sheep shears, bales of wool sacks, sides of harness and saddle leather in the swing and trail wagons, and with barrels of whisky and kegs of beer in the lead one. He pulled away from the warehouse some time before Blacksnake Baker and the other freighters in this day's train were loaded. With loaded wagons to heave on, the wheelers and pointers shot-gunned, the swingers tried to jump the chain, the leaders bucked into their collars, jumped back like they were jerked, then bucked ahead again; but King Bolt Jack just jiggered his jerkline, talked hard but low to his horses; then, as the iron tires of the front wheels began to screech on the gravel, he cracked the bud of his blacksnake over the swingers' heads, and all the spans lunged together, the wagons

jerked and rattled, and the outfit rolled away. It was a pretty start, and Blacksnake Baker had watched it enviously, King Bolt knew.

There were wet spots on the wagon covers from yesterday's rain, and these steamed in the morning sunlight. There were puddles in the main street and the board sidewalks had a wet smell. The bright morning was at its clearest and freshest time, and a couple of early robins were enjoying it so that they chirped from the limbs of a cottonwood at the jingle of swinging bells. The bartenders, not having many customers at this hour, stood in front of their saloons and bawled jokes at the freighter as his outfit tramped and rolled by.

Brewery Hill loomed ahead. It was so called because of the brewery at its foot, with a little beer saloon where it was the custom for freighters to pause and drink farewell to The Dalles in a glass of beer. King Bolt Jack honored the custom by observance, then started his outfit on the heavy drag up the long hill.

The horses, especially the broncs in the swing, were fractious on the start; but when Jack swung out of the saddle and leaped from team to team, giving them the bud of his blacksnake, they soon warmed their shoulders and marched into the plugging gait of the steady-pulling freight team. The bells made a slow jingle now. All the lead bars were even and the chain was tight, like a stretched rubber band. The trace chains and harness leather creaked, the horses' hoofs ploomed in the drying mud of the road, and the wagon wheels rolled in a dull rumble.

The top was reached with only two stops for blows. Up ahead the road twisted through the deep wrinkles of foothills. From here the Columbia Valley made a

grand view. The river was a black streak in the shadow of the rock walls of Tumwater Gorge, but above it the foam of Celilo Falls made a bright white horseshoe in the mellow sunlight. An Upper River steamboat was waving its white wood smoke against the blue of the sky. The tremendous hills beyond the Washington shore, bunched and piled in wrinkles and rolls, looked as old as time. King Bolt Jack gazed at them, and sighed. He had a feeling that he wanted to crawl into the lap of those old hills and rest his life peacefully away. But the other freighting outfits were stringing up the hill, with Blacksnake Baker in the lead. King Bolt Jack "yayed" his team. Banner and Hondo tightened the chain. Jack felt the strain of Notion's muscles under the saddle. His outfit rolled on.

At Five Mile Creek he stopped to water his horses and to feed them oats in nosebags. He had eaten his lunch and was preparing to sample the whisky in his lead wagon, when Blacksnake Baker drove up. King Bolt Jack didn't raise his eyes from his task. He hammered up the top hasp of a barrel, bored a hole through a stave with a small gimlet, and then siphoned a gallon jug full through a rye straw. The jug filled, he plugged the gimlet hole, and drove the hasp down over it. He was ready to travel again. As he threw his leg over the saddle seat he shot a glance at Blacksnake Baker. His rival was engaged in sampling whisky and did not look up from his jug until he heard the sounds of Jack's departure. Then he turned his whiskers over his left shoulder, and bawled:

"Feelin' luckier every minute!"

"You ain't got nothin' on me!" King Bolt Jack came back at him.

The first day's drive was easy going, the road meandering through the sagebrush and bunchgrass slopes

of low, fat hills. The road had good bottom, there were no steep grades, and the horses were fresh. King Bolt Jack had plenty of leisure for thought. So he slouched in the saddle, streaked his team up with a few familiar swear words once in awhile, tightened the brake rope on the pitches, and figured at length on the contest ahead of him. Fifteen poker nights between here and Prineville, and Blacksnake Baker across the blanket. The seven-mile grade down the steep slopes of Tygh Ridge, and Blacksnake Baker always behind him. The long two-day drag from Sherar's Bridge, through the mud of Shaniko Flat. Then Tight Bottom Hill, the toughest pull on any Western freighting trail. Wherever one star freighter should stick a wagon he would have to bet on the pull with the other. Unless one of them was cleaned out before Tight Bottom was reached they'd bet their outfits on the pull up that steep, treacherous, bottomless stretch of doby mire. . . .

"I'm feelin' luckier every minute!"

The yell kept ringing in King Bolt's ears. Finally it brought on a presentiment. King Bolt Jack shivered in his saddle. The bright blue of the sky above turned dark for him. His soul sank into gloom, in spite of the whisky which he had sampled so liberally every half-hour. For he rarely had presentiments, and when he did have one it always presaged misfortune. Never in his life had he enjoyed a presentiment before an event that brought him glory or gold. Only evil events had cast their shadows before for him.

King Bolt Jack remembered every presentiment of his past. There had always been one before a Comanche attack on the old Santa Fé Trail. A powerful presentiment had oppressed him before the time he

was alkalied on the Overland Trail, when he was freighting over the Nevada desert. When he was covered in a Blue Mountains landslide, when he stooped over with his back to a broncho mule in Missoula, Montana, when he was splicing a broken reach and a wagonbed of whisky dropped on him in the Cœur d'Alenes—every time a dark and oppressive presentiment had preceded the misfortune. And he had a presentiment now. It certainly meant that Blacksnake Baker would beat him at poker, outpull him through Shaniko Flat, perhaps win his outfit on Tight Bottom Hill. Was he at last, after so much glory, to be driven off the freight trails? King Bolt Jack was afraid; for awhile he thought, faint-heartedly, of turning back, selling his outfit in The Dalles, and going to Mexico; but his courage was not so easily quenched. He'd play the game through, to the last check. He squared his shoulders and lifted his head, looking out over the plumed and belled arches above the hames of his swingers and leaders. He saw the iron-gray beauty of Banner, stepping high and proud under the jerkline. He heard the gay jingle of bells.

"Ain't never quit fer presentiments yet, have I, old hosses?" he bawled. "It's me with the cards, and you with the mud, and we'll go to hell a-fightin', hey, old-timers? So whoopee! and what the hell!"

After that he felt more pleasure in the rain-washed air, the sunshine in the yellow tufts of bunchgrass and the warm blue of the sky. He sampled the whisky cheerily and grinned over the amazing names he thought up to call the presentiment.

But under it all he had a dismal sense of Blacksnake Baker crowding along behind him, on his trail, and feeling luckier every minute.

III

NO POKER GAME was started that night at Werner's, the first station out of The Dalles. Fifty freighters bound down from the upper country were in, and the hours between supper and sleep were spent by Baker, Jack and the other up-bound freighters listening to tales of terrible roads. There was fair bottom in most of the road over Shaniko Flat, but with a few days of heavy rain the outfits would have to plow through sucking mud. And Tight Bottom Hill, beyond Cross Hollows, was in the worst shape in its history. All freighters bound for Redmond, Bend, Silver Lake, Lakeview, Klamath Falls, or Prineville, had better pray. Both Blacksnake Baker and King Bolt Jack looked knowing and serious as they listened, but no words passed between them until bedtime. Then Blacksnake Baker raised his whiskers above his tarpaulin, and bawled across the fire at King Bolt Jack:

"How you feel about a little stud to-morrer night? Me, I'm feelin' luckier every minute!"

"That's right. Feel lucky while you still got the chance," King Bolt came back at him.

The news grapevined among the freighters bedded under their wagons. To-morrow night hell would begin to pop.

It was another good drive the next day, for the going covered the best stretch of the entire road. That night at the Chicken Springs station, when supper was over and the horses were turned out on the bunch-grass, the stud-poker game was started. Five other freighters sat in with Baker and King Bolt Jack. After an hour of play they began to look at one another with wonder in their eyes. It was an astonishingly even run of cards. So far no player was winner

or loser. All the other freighters gathered about the game to watch and marvel. The deals and bets ran on through another hour, and still the cards held to their even run. A sense of mystery pervaded the game. The players were tense and quiet. The men playing "rubbers" hardly breathed while a hand was on. The fire was forgotten and died down. No sounds were heard except the nickers and sighs of the horses out in the bunchgrass, until lantern globes sputtered from sudden drops of rain. The game broke up without a word. Not a player was over a few dimes winner or loser. The night was black with rain when King Bolt Jack rolled into his blankets. The gloom penetrated to his heart. He had held his own, but his presentiment was stronger than ever.

In the morning the freighters started down Tygh Ridge in a heavy drizzle. King Bolt Jack was still in the lead, with Blacksnake Baker following him. Seven miles of steep, winding road were ahead. A five-hundred-foot precipitous slope always to the left. A freighter never looked down that slope, for he never had time. Always he was worming his outfit into a wrinkle of the mountain or around a roll. The bends were sharp, and at every one the pointers had to cross the chain, to pull at an angle from the leaders and swingers and hold the wagons to the grade. It required the keenest driving and the most delicate braking to keep the three wagons of an outfit, with their ten tons of freight, rolling true on the steep, narrow road.

The road squirmed in and out of the folds of the mountainside like a tremendous, long worm. The wagons were like fat, white-backed bugs, the teams their long, wriggling necks, creeping on the tremendous worm's back. Above were the folds of the mountain, rolling up to round crests, with gray packs of

raggedy clouds drooping in misty tatters until they almost touched the summits. The mountain's earth was rust-red in the rain. Here it had ridges of black-and-brown rock, and there it had a wide bulging slope like a fat woman's lap, yellow with old bunchgrass and white with new. At the mountain's foot was a plunging creek bordered with leafing cottonwoods. Far away was the narrow floor of Tygh Valley, with the mountains around it looming dimly in the drizzle.

King Bolt Jack forgot his presentiment, the strangely even run of the cards the night before, and the perils and hardships of the days ahead, in the intense labor of steering his outfit down the grade. His body was drenched with sweat and his nerves were quivering like strummed banjo strings when he swung around the last bend and Banner and Hondo straightened the chain over a level track. He had never made a better descent of the great grade. It was easy going on to Sherar's Hotel and the tollbridge across the gorge of the Deschutes, easy going on to the station of Dead Dog. If the cards would only break for him there! But the triumphant yell of Blacksnake Baker sounded behind him. Other outfits were in trouble on the grade, but Baker had never once ground a hub into a bank or dropped a wheel over a rim on the bends and turns. The shadow of the presentiment fell over King Bolt Jack again. The cards to-night in Dead Dog—the mud of Shaniko Flat—Blacksnake Baker yelling down the line:

“Feelin' luckier every minute, King Bolt Jack!”

IV

THAT NIGHT at Dead Dog poker history was made, and the contest between Blacksnake Baker and King

Bolt Jack began to assume the actual heroic proportions of the legend. The seven freighters played until three o'clock in the morning, yet not a one was more than one dollar winner or loser. Blacksnake Baker had nothing to say about being lucky when the morning's start was made; his gaze was sober and hard, and his whiskers hung stiffly over his chest, showing that the jaws they covered were grimly set. King Bolt Jack's heart beat with some hope. He was holding his own.

The drive through sticky mud to Bakeoven station was made in a rain that cut like sleet, the wind drove it so hard. Wet and tired though they were, the seven gambling freighters renewed their game when supper was done. Till four o'clock in the morning they played, and still not a man could call himself a winner at the game. The wonder of the players and the watchers increased. Nothing like this had ever been heard of before. Never had the cards persisted so in running even for seven men at stud. A marvelous chapter of poker history was being made. Before the game ended some of the players were turned sick from the even run. New decks were tried, but the change was useless. The cards are the cards, and they kept running the same.

"Luck's comin' to meet me on Shaniko Flat!" Blacksnake Baker had the courage to yell through his beard, when the freighters were ready for the morning start. "I feel it in my bones!"

King Bolt Jack's only response was to swing into the saddle and "yay" his team.

It was the dreadfulest lug through Shaniko Flat he had ever known. The clouds rolled up in stacks and piles from the West and the wind threshed them into tatters and boiled them across the sky. The wind

slapped the wagon covers, the freighters and the horses with tremendous wet smacks; and at each blow it would rip and tear furiously into the outfits, seemingly bent on overturning wagons, knocking men out of their saddles and horses off their hoofs; plastering all with bursts of rain, then resting and heaving, catching its breath before making another tremendous attack on wagons, horses and men.

The horses, their necks bowed, bored ahead, and the wagons slopped on through the mud of the road. The horses mired at every step, the wagon wheels curled out ragged ribbons of mud at each side as they ground slowly on. The Flat rolled away like a rough prairie to the banks of heaving clouds. A mighty stretch of gray and white, sagebrush and bunchgrass, dismal to see on this stormy day. The outfits of King Bolt Jack and Blacksnake Baker never faltered once on the miserable drag. Seventeen others were stalled. The horses and men who came through were storm-beaten, wretchedly tired, when the Cross Hollows station was reached that night.

There was a roadhouse at Cross Hollows, with gambling tables in the barroom, and with cribs to accommodate the bands of French women who traveled the Central Oregon country in the early days. After supper the freighters packed the barroom. A dozen rounds of drinks, then Blacksnake Baker sat at a table, a deck of cards in his hand.

"Shaniko Flat was a pipe for me and my team!" he bawled. "I rear to play stud till daylight! Who's settin' with me to break the even run of cards? Who wants to gamble with Blacksnake Baker for whisky, gold, hosses, freighting outfits, or life? I rear to play! Come on, all you freighters who feel high and proud!"

King Bolt Jack stepped forward alone. The other

gambling freighters knew the challenge was meant only for him. The stud-poker championship of The Dalles to Prineville road was to be settled here. When that was settled they would contest the pulling of Tight Bottom Hill, which was out of the Cross Hollows station. It was blocking freight traffic now, after the heavy rains.

"Neither one'll make that pull for a week," said a grizzled freighter. "I tried it yesterday. Put ten teams on one wagon and all they did was mire and snap chains. Tight Bottom'll lick 'em both."

King Bolt Jack heard that as he sat down at the green-covered table. He felt a shiver race down his spine. In the shadows back of Blacksnake Baker he seemed to see the shape of his presentiment, in the form of a grinning devil newly risen from hell. But he was going to finish game, whatever the end might be.

"Shut up, and deal the cards," said King Bolt Jack.

Under the yellow glow from coal oil lamps the game ran on. Freighters and stage passengers, cowboys and sheep-herders from the ranches around gathered before midnight in the Cross Hollows Roadhouse to watch the famous game. The cards were running more amazingly even than ever, with only two hands in each play. Nearly half of the turnups ended in a tie. Whispers rose from the crowd:

"For Gawd's sake! You ever see the beat?"

"Never did. The ol' hell's in them cards, shore!"

The game ran on until daybreak, without a change in the even run of the cards. Both men grimly refused to stop for breakfast; they had other freighters feed and water their teams. Through the hours of morning and noon, on until the evening lamps were lighted again the hole cards were dealt, the turnups made, the

chips shoved out in bets; and still the cards kept their even run. Neither could plunges and bluffs change this amazing impartiality of fortune. Let Blacksnake Baker plunge and win, then King Bolt Jack would plunge and win. Let King Bolt Jack bluff and lose, then Baker would do the same.

The two great freighters had been at the table for twenty-four hours, but neither one would yield to weariness or hunger. They were both haggard and red-eyed, but they stuck to the table, desperately determined to break the even run of the cards, until midnight, when they played that famous final hand.

King Bolt Jack's black presentiment had never been more oppressive than it was when he looked at his hole card from that last deal and saw that it was the ace of spades. But it only made him take a stronger grip on his courage. He bet ten dollars, Baker being the dealer. Baker called, and dealt. The king of spades turned up for King Bolt, and the king of clubs for Baker. A twenty-dollar bet and call. The next turnup brought the ten of spades and the ten of clubs. Thirty bet, and thirty called. Again Blacksnake Baker dealt two cards. King Bolt Jack bet five double eagles on the queen of spades and Blacksnake Baker called him on the queen of clubs—then Baker's brawny hand, shaking like the hand of a girl opening a love-letter, flipped over to his rival the jack of spades!

A spade royal! King Bolt Jack felt his strained nerves relax; he wanted to whoop and yell, for the even run of the cards was surely broken now! His infernal presentiment had lied at last! For the even run of the cards had ended with his getting his first royal flush in thirty years of poker!

He shoved all of his chips and gold into the pot, without looking at Baker's turnup until after the bet

was made. Then his heart seemed to melt and run down to his toes. For the trunup was the jack of clubs! Two royal flushes in a two-handed game of stud—it could *never* be! But the way the cards had been running—and there was the old gorilla shoving in all of his chips for a call—and when King Bolt's shaking fingers turned over his hole card ace of spades, Blacksnake Baker showed a deathly white under his whiskers and tan, and turned up—the ace of clubs!

Two royal flushes from one deal in a two-handed stud-poker game!

The heads of both freighters thudded at once on the green-covered table; they sagged and tumbled as one man from their chairs to the barroom floor. There was an awed hush in the crowd as other freighters carried the two rivals to bed. Two royal flushes—at once—in a—well, there just simply was not a thing for a man to say about poker like that!

V

THE CARDS had licked them both. On the second morning after the collapse of the game the two great freighters met again at the bar of the Cross Hollows Roadhouse. The freighters who were waiting for the mud to dry on Tight Bottom Hill crowded around them. The two rivals looked at each other with bleak eyes. Each one knew that the other was still poker-sick; the cards were not to be mentioned. But a grand play must be made.

"I'm hookin' up fer Tight Bottom this mornin'," said Blacksnake Baker.

"You ain't got nothin' on me," said King Bolt Jack.

"King Bolt, I bet all my gold I outpull you on that hill."

"You're took up right now, Blacksnake, if you bet your outfit. I bet mine, and the gold is on the side."

Blacksnake's whiskers stiffened.

"And the man who loses agrees to go herdin' sheep?"

"Yep. Suits me."

"Yer on."

Again King Bolt Jack took the lead on the freight trail, through the wind and rain. He heard Blacksnake Baker's outfit tramping and rolling behind him. He knew that a hundred freighters had saddled horses and were riding out to see the great contest. But King Bolt Jack never turned in his saddle. He stared straight ahead, stared grimly and defiantly at the presentiment that took on a vague shape over the road ahead. He was staring that presentiment down, swearing to himself that on the road he could not be licked. The cards were the cards, but these horses were his own. Banner and Hondo, Blossom and Cal, Turtle and Dove, Plaster and Blister, Toler'ble and Notion—no better ten-up had ever bellied down in the mud for a heaving pull on any freighting trail! He would keep his faith in his horses; the presentiment lied!

When he had reached the foot of the hill King Bolt Jack was thinking of nothing but the pull. The grade, twisting above a deep gulch, was only an eighth of a mile in length, but it was the steepest one on the road, and it was dead-black with doby mud. A cloud, dark as the earth of the road, loomed ominously above the crest of the hill. The wind blew evenly, breaking slanting lines of rain in spatters against horses and wagons. The soaked branches of the sagebrush above the grade drooped mournfully under the wind. King Bolt Jack looked over his wheelers, pointers and swingers. They were hanging their heads, miserable in the rain. The

presentiment began to crowd over the freighter again, then he looked at Banner.

The beautiful iron-gray had her neck arched, her ears were pricked ahead, she was staring at the grade, and King Bolt's heart pounded mightily as he realized that she was rearing for the pull. She knew that hill, his jerkline leading mare! She knew she could lick it, and she'd warm the other spans with her fighting fire! The presentiment faded again. King Bolt Jack swung from the saddle. After 'em now, old-timer! Victory or hell!

With a sledge from the jockey box he knocked the brake blocks loose and stowed them in a wagon. Then he uncoupled his swing wagon from the lead. He was back in the saddle again, without a look at Blacksnake Baker or the crowd of freighters in black slickers, watching from their horses.

"Yay, Banner!" he called.

The jerkline leader leaned slowly into the collar. Hondo tightened the traces beside her. The swingers lunged, the pointers stepped out, and the wheelers stepped easily on, for the one wagon had been started without them. Then King Bolt felt the strain of muscles under his legs. Before him the ears of the leaders, then their hames, rose slowly to a level with his eyes. They were on the steep grade.

The rumble of wheels and the solid tramp of hoofs were suddenly muffled. Doby was clinging to the iron of tires and shoes, padding them against sound. A horse would stumble easily now, slip from the treacherous black muck between the ruts, go down, and stall the outfit. Then it couldn't be started again without help—without help from Blacksnake Baker, and a hundred freighters looking on.

Around the first, second and third turns the ten-up

did not falter in the track. Now the top of the grade was close. But there was a suckhole, a deadly patch of mire, to pull through before the pull could come to an end. And the horses were slowing down. King Bolt Jack could feel Notion breathing in great heaves. But no stop for a blow could be made on Tight Bottom Hill.

No stop for a blow, not with the jerkline leading mare buckling down, plowing so furiously through the doby mud toward the black storm cloud; Hondo slacked beside her; she snapped savagely at his neck, and he lunged on. King Bolt Jack swung from the saddle. His blacksnake was uncoiled as his boots sank into the muck. The bud snapped in cracking shots that stung the flanks of swingers and pointers. On the pull through the suckhole the freighter plunged ahead, leaped back, his blacksnake ever swinging and curling high and cracking low, his feet sinking to the ankles at every hard step through the muck, as the horses bellied down and crawled desperately on—on through the suckhole, on up the last fifty feet of harder road—and then the black cloud loomed far away, beyond a slope and a rolling sagebrush plain. The lead wagon was at the top of Tight Bottom Hill. Banner, snorting and blowing, turned her head and looked triumphantly into the eyes of her driver.

"We'll bring 'em all up, old-timer!" the look seemed to say.

His doubts all vanished. The presentiment was gone. He and his horses had licked the hill. The other two wagons had lighter loads. With caution and cunning, with any luck at all, they would pull all of them up the hill. And luck was on the road.

Tight Bottom Hill was licked by Banner and Hondo, Blossom and Cal, Turtle and Dove, Plaster

and Blister, Toler'ble and Notion, and their great driver, King Bolt Jack. Licked when it was at its worst in mud and rain, licked when all the freighters of the trail said the hill could not be pulled.

VI

KING BOLT JACK made no fuss over his achievement. The bet was not yet won. The freighting might run as evenly as the cards had run, there might be another tie. So he simply blanketed his horses on the hilltop, slipped the straps of fat nosebags over their heads, got out his own lunch, ate calmly away, and said never a word as he waited for Blacksnake Baker to make the pull.

He had no presentiment of victory. He had no presentiment at all now, so he was pretty certain he was going to win, for he never had presentiments about good luck. He ate calmly on as Blacksnake Baker made the first two turns of the grade. He wanted the freighters ganged around his wagons to feel that he didn't give a damn whether Baker pulled the hill or not. But when he saw the leaders approaching the suckhole, when he saw that the jerkline mare's head was hanging an inch lower at every heavy step, when he saw whiskers wave in the wind as the driver left the saddle, when he heard the first crack of the blacksnake, then King Bolt Jack stood up on his wagon side, hung on to the brake staff, and held his breath.

A wheeler slipped, throwing his mate ahead. The blacksnake cut his side. The wheeler lunged furiously, retrieved himself, plowed on into the deep, sucking mire. The jerkline leader faltered; Blacksnake Baker, his whip arm raised, jumped toward the head of his team. Here the track twisted around the center of

the hole, a circle of black ooze. When Baker was even with it he flung back the bud of his blacksnake. As he snapped it ahead again, aimed for the flank of the jerkline leader, he slipped. The blacksnake whipped around his neck, in tight coils. The jerk overbalanced him; he seemed to dive for the black, oozing heart of the suckhole. For an instant only his boots showed above the muck. Then they kicked wildly from sight, and the muck heaved. From it a black mass emerged. Blacksnake Baker pawed the mud from his eyes. His outfit was stalled. King Bolt Jack was already pulling the nosebags from his horses' heads. But by the time he had reached the stalled team and wagon, Blacksnake Baker was already far down the hill, a black lonely figure, tramping on through the wind and rain to Cross Hollows, and a sheep-herding job. . . .

"Two thousand for his outfit," said one of the freighters in the admiring crowd.

"She's your'n," said King Bolt Jack. "I don't want no more'n Banner and them other beauties of mine. . . ."

MR. STAHLBERG

I

NOWADAYS he only speaks of his troubles. You expect that, of course, from an old pool-hall roustabout whose days are engaged in sweeping and scrubbing in the tracks of young ranch hands and in emptying spittoons crammed with chocolate bar and chewing gum wrappers. Yes, sir; when you enter a pool-hall in a one-time roaring cow town like Prineville and encounter a roustabout with a saddled-marked frame that creaks whenever it stiffly moves and is topped by a countenance melancholy and wrinkled, from which issues a hoarse, plaintive voice, you know, then, that you are due to hear of sad events.

"Would you say, now, I was beginnin' to show my acshul age?" Mr. Stahlberg asks. "Would you figger I was eighty, stranger? You never would? Well, well! Still, I dunno. Maybe you ain't no jedge on ages. I reckon I'm failin' right fast. Yes, sir, I've gone right down the last twelve year or so. What with kidney trouble from so many years of buckarooin', and a spell of blood-pizenin' from hittin' a Siwash in the tooth with my bare fist, and a lot of innards troubles I can't afford to find out what they air, I'm ailin' more ever' day, and showin' it.

"Held up fine till I was sixty-five. Then my kidneys

begin to git me foul. Was operated on fer gall stones, but she never took. Went sheep, fin'ly. Yes, sir; both herded and sheared. It was discouragin'. Me, who had once been the star mustang-creaser of the Texas range, to come down so low—but the whole cattle country had gone to hell, and I—say, I got the rheumatism, too! Lookit how my left knee's swelled. I've figgered maybe my kidneys have consider'ble to do with my rheumatism. Yes, sir . . ."

Mr. Stahlberg is, alas, no longer the bard of Prineville. The glories of the past of the town which was the Oregon sister of Cheyenne and San Antone in the days of the maverick and slickear fade for Mr. Stahlberg in aches and pains. Even so Homer, in the times when his locks had grown scanty and white, perhaps laid aside the lyre to lament the stiffness of his joints and to ponder the tightening, as of hot bands, over his breast.

The epic of the Western cattle country is heard no more in Prineville. The old surviving bards are decrepit and forlorn, reduced to mean labor. Looking from Prineville, ranch houses and stacks of alfalfa dot the Ochoco Valley as far as the eye can see. Mighty hills, gray, green, and pale-yellow with sagebrush and bunchgrass, shove up and roll away from the valley floor. The farthest skyline is rugged, dark-green with the pines of mountain lands. The ranch and the range survive, but a pastoral quietness breathes through Prineville's streets, even after the roundup days. In such a scene the bard is mute; to the young ranch hands who munch chocolate bars as they chalk their cues he can speak only of the ills of age; he is a human epitaph in the graveyard of a heroic life.

But there was a time . . . and not so long ago . . .

II

SADDLE HORSES were jammed before the hitching racks of all the saloons. The teams and wagons of ranch outfits in for winter supplies clattered along the main street. Not a swinging door was still. Bands of cowboys roved from saloon to saloon, the drowsy mellow sunlight of the Indian summer day drawing them from the bars. The sidewalk before the Rimrock Hotel was fringed with cowboys who dangled their high-heeled boots over the street, lazily rolled cigarettes, nonchalantly spat tobacco juice, violently argued concerning cow brutes and horses, and solemnly lied. The old cow town was flushed with raw life.

"Gosh, Art, ain't it wonderful? Ain't you glad now you come along? Just like I've always read about!"

A young man of twenty spoke thus to a young man of seventeen as they lingered and listened behind the gang in front of the Rimrock Hotel.

"Just listen to this feller, now, Art!"

A lean-faced buckaroo was drawling on through the climax of a horse-breaking yarn:

"—and there I was a-layin' when I come to, flat on my back, my boots a-danglin' over the bottom barb wire, the leather cut plumb through. I rolled my eyes back at the buckskin, and he was ca'm as you please, rollin' his eyes back at me, the hackamore rope a-hangin'. I could 'a' got him agin; but I gazed up at the legs of my boots where they was cut through with the barb wire; and I thought of how it would 'a' come out if it had been my neck instid of my boot legs; so I laid and philoserphized thisaway:

" 'The first time I forked that buckskin I *knowed* I could ride him, the second time I *thought* I could

ride him, the third time I knowed I *couldn't* ride him, but I figgered God hates a coward, so here goes nothin'. Now then, Jugs Hartley, there's yer legs, and here's yer neck, there's the buckskin and here's the barb wire; so don't you give a damn *who* hates a coward; look at yer legs and think of yer neck, Jugs Hartley, be hated and be damned, but just you up and say perlately, "Fare thee well, Mister Buckskin, we part to meet no more!"'

"That's how I philosophersized, and that's how I done. Here I am, without a scratch on my neck, and I expect to die without a nary scratch on her. There, now, is why I ain't ridin' the buckskin."

"I bet I could ride the buckskin, Art," murmured the young man of twenty. "Once I get some practice, anyway."

"For gosh' sake, don't go to braggin' out *loud!*" implored the young man of seventeen. "Do have *some* sense!"

"Oh, I ain't ready to tackle no buckin' buckskins yet," said the other. "I know I'm just a tenderfoot, But I shorely am feelin' nacheral and to home. This here country's the kind you read about. Right here's the kind of fellers I've always wanted to know. And here I am, right in with 'em! Hearkenin' to their blood-stirrin' accounts of escapin' death by a hair's breadth, seein' the kind of heroes I've always wanted to brave a bloody fate with right here before my eyes in their chaps and spurs, seein' their hosses in front of their saloons, branded and ever'thing. It makes me simply ache for us to get out on a ranch job and ride buckin' hosses, round up steers, and shoot rustlers and Indians. Say, Art, don't it just make you kind of shiver?"

"No," said Art mournfully. "I don't want no ranch job."

He said no more, for his heart was too full for utterance. He stuck his hands in his overalls pockets, crossed his feet, and leaned dejectedly against the weather-beaten front of the hotel. His friend was hanging over the cowboys, taking in every word.

The darn fool! What was the use of getting to be friends with a man when he was bound to turn out such a darn fool? But you simply couldn't help but like Curly Crick. He'd liked Curly ever since the slim, starey-eyed young man had gone to work with him in the grading camp down on the Columbia. Curly had hoboed from Iowa; he was going to earn enough money to buy a horse, a saddle and a shooting iron, he said, and then become a cowboy. He had seemed kind of weak-minded that way; but then he was such good company to rattle around with and talk to after supper, a man didn't hold such ideas against him. Not until he'd actually started out for Prineville and insisted on his friend coming along. It was no use to tell him you had lived among cow hands most of your life up in Eastern Washington, and to argue that the wheat ranchers up there, and the town folks, too, thought cow hands were a pretty low lot. Curly would simply talk anybody down, and he was too darned a fool to argue.

"I never read of any cowboys in Eastern Washington, Art, so you don't know any more about them than I do. We'll go up to a real cow country and get us ranch jobs. That's all there is to it."

Well, he'd come along, because a man couldn't help but like the darn fool, and he'd figured that when Curly saw what a dismal place a sagebrush cow town

actually was and what a low lot cow hands were, he might learn some sense. But he hadn't yet. It was simply beyond belief how a young man with eyes and ears could keep on fooling himself.

The reason, probably, Art reflected, was that Curly was getting along in years. He had observed more and more since his own fourteenth year that when men began to get along toward their twenties they had less and less sense. They became such darn fools that they would settle down to plug at some miserable steady job, and even get married. That was it with Curly Crick, probably. He was getting along in years, and growing into such a darn fool he wanted to settle down as a cow hand. . . .

"I wonder, maybe, if we hadn't better get some supper."

Art straightened suddenly, and his face brightened until his freckles were spots of light. This was something like! Curly had a little sense left, after all. . . .

At a table in the Rimrock's dining room, with a platter of smoking steaks and a pot of steaming coffee in front of him, Art's hopes revived. Somehow he would get Curly out of this infernal cow town. He didn't know how—for every so often Curly would raise a dreamy stare, and sigh, "Just like you read about! Gosh, Art, ain't it wonderful?"—but somehow . . . Feeling so stuffed, warm and comfortable inside, with the twilight coming on, sparks snapping from the fat red sides of the big heater, men eating heartily all around . . . well, you could only lean back, puff up cigarette smoke, and see it curl into pictures of you and Curly wintering in Portland, going to shows, maybe having a couple of girls . . . a wonderful time . . . you simply couldn't think then of going out to a miserable winter ranch job.

III

THE DREAM faded and argument flourished again over glasses of beer on the bar of the Rimrock Hotel.

"They got range cattle and bronses in Eastern Washington anyway," declared Art. "I know *them*. And if you did you wouldn't *think* of bein' a cow hand."

"Why, looky here, that's one of my main reasons!" protested Curly Crick. "Here I been livin' in Ioway, among milk cows and work hosses all my life, and, while I liked 'em well enough, they certainly are common. I want a life that's got some adventure to it, like bein' a cowboy, and I intend to have it."

"Curly, I hate to say it, but blamed if you ain't shorely a born fool! Why, Curly, steers are so wild and stubborn they'll drive a nervous man like you crazy! And cows is worse. They'll never go where you want, unless you got 'em in a big band. That's the main trouble with bein' a cow hand, especially for a flighty, excitable man like you are."

"You're prejudiced," argued Curly. "I never heard of cowpunchin' bein' hard on the nerves that way before."

"He's right," a hoarse voice said from behind them. "Yep, this yer yearlin's got 'er pat. And that ain't all."

The two young men turned and stared. They looked upon a mountain of a man. He was coatless and his shirtsleeves were rolled above forearms which were as red as brick and were matted with rusty hairs. The collar of his gray woolen shirt had been squeezed into a roll around a thick neck. The shirt bulged over a mighty chest, then it bulged more over an imposing belly, and sloped gently back to the brass suspender buttons of waist overalls. Above this vast shape

loomed a big chin stubbly with sandy bristles, a wide mouth, fleshy cheeks reddened and toughened by many winds, small blue eyes that shone with innocent friendliness upon the two young men. That was not all. A gigantic lop-brimmed and crown-twisted white Stetson towered so high that it seemed to rake the ceiling. The wide mouth opened and the hoarse voice issued in a hearty boom.

"Pleased to meet two sech intelligent-lookin' fellers as you air. Stahlberg's my name. Benjamin A. Stahlberg. You want to learn about buckarooin', and I'm yer man. The old redeye fer me, Joe!"

His order to the bartender was given as he shoved his huge body between the two young men. Curly Crick could only stare at him with open-mouthed admiration. He was speechless with awe. Even Art was mightily affected.

"I was just tellin' my friend, Curly Crick, here, that cowpunchin' was hard on the nerves," he said meekly.

"I heerd you and I said it warn't all," said Mr. Stahlberg, pouring himself a second drink. "And it ain't." He swallowed the liquor and smacked his lips. "Even if you ain't got nerves yer bound to have kidneys. And I never yet knowed an old-time cowpoke who didn't have kidney trouble more or less. And most of us has consider'ble bother with our livers, too, along with the kidneys."

"Well, hell!" exclaimed Curly. "Who'd have thought it? I never heard of the like! What makes it?"

"Jerkin', joltin' and yankin'," said Mr. Stahlberg, pouring himself a third glass. "A cowpoke is bound to get more of that than anybody. Sooner or later all his innards gets jerked, jolted and yanked out of their

proper places, and he's bound to have all the differ'nt kinds of innards troubles—stummick, lung, heart, liver and kidney, but mainly kidney. They's no way to git around it."

"Well, hell!" Curly was still amazed. "I never did read of that, and I'd never dreamed it! You seem to stood it mighty good yourself, Mr. Stahlberg."

"Yes and no." Mr. Stahlberg downed his third drink, frowned sadly at the empty glass, and poured a fourth. "I reckon I'm well perserved fer a man of sixty-five, takin' men of sixty-five as they go. I reckon my kidneys would stack up with the kidneys of most sixty-five-year-olds. But I've always took special care of my kidneys, knowin' how hard range-ridin' was on 'em. Fer one thing, though I'm Dutcher'n hell and proud of it, I never drunk beer. Fer another, I've always kep' 'em treated with Doan's and all the other kinds of kidney pills and medicines I ever heerd of. Still I've had consider'ble kidney trouble. A cowpoke can't get away from it."

Mr. Stahlberg swallowed his fourth drink and poured a fifth. He drank it with great haste, for three men who had just entered called him to the upper end of the bar.

"Got to go have a drink with my range boss," he said over his shoulder. "See you young fellers later. Tell you all you want to know."

The bartender demanded seventy-five cents for Mr. Stahlberg's five drinks. Art paid it without objection and ordered two beers for himself and Curly. His freckles shone with the pleasure of triumph as he saw doubts clouding Curly's open-eyed gaze.

"There you are," said Art. "I guess you'll listen to an old-timer like him, all right. What did I tell you?"

"He may be an old cowboy. Guess prob'ly he is." Curly said that reflectively. Then his eyes lighted with hope again. "But I bet he's an old liar, too!"

"Why, he is not!" Art was so disgusted with his friend that he yelled in indignation. "Mr. Stahlberg never neither lied about his kidney trouble! All cow hands have it, and lung and liver troubles besides, just like he said!"

"I simply can't believe it," declared Curly. "If he really had it, he wouldn't go around braggin' about it. A decent man wouldn't anyway. And if a man ain't got the decency not to brag about his kidney troubles, he ain't got the decency not to lie, neither."

"Why, Curly, that's just it! That's a cow hand every time! That's why they're looked on as such a low lot over in Eastern Washington, where I was raised. You ought to hear the names they have for grub. They call the frothin' on a puddin' or a lemon pie calf-slobber. And the name they have for gravy! And some of their songs! Why, braggin' around about his kidney trouble simply ain't *nothin'* to a cow hand!"

Art drank his beer, looking sidewise at Curly as he tilted the glass. Curly was holding his glass in his two hands, staring mournfully at the foam. Art's dream revived again, as he felt the cool liquor trickle down his throat. Maybe Curly's years were not telling on him so much, after all. It actually looked like he was coming to his senses. What a fine winter they would have in Portland, if only Curly did quit being a darn fool! . . . The lights of a burlesque stage shone for him as they had once a winter ago . . . music . . . girls dancing in tights . . . the funniest blamed Irishman and Jew . . . him and Curly just laughing themselves sick . . . oh, lordy, the good times there would be—

"Fer hell's sake!"

The low, awed exclamation from the bartender, brought Art back to reality.

"It's old Slickear Bill hisself, damfit ain't!"

The two young men turned sharply and stared. They saw an old-looking man who appeared as lean and hard as a strip of wire rope, stubbing in high-heeled boots toward a rawhide-bottomed chair in a dark corner of the barroom. He sat down, turning his face toward the bar. Under the low-slanted brim of a black hat one steel-gray eye glittered in the shadows. The left eyelid drooped over an empty socket, like a wrinkled leaf. Between the limp eyelid and the steely eye was a sharp hook of a nose. The chin, jutting under a slit of a mouth, was pointed and small, but it was as hard-looking as a flint arrowhead. Curly and Art had no eyes for Slickear Bill's clothes; they could only look at his face, until that steely eye bored into their gaze and made prickles run down their spines. . . .

"Yes, sir, boys, that's Slickear Bill, the identical man who wrapped the mahogany around Hank Vaughn. He ain't been to Prineville in a year, that I know of. Boys, yer lookin' at *somebody* now! Him and nobody else fixed Hank Vaughn!"

"Who—who was Hank Vaughn?" asked Curly, his eyes bugging.

"Hank Vaughn—why, he—well, I ain't been in Prineville long enough to 'a' knowed Hank Vaughn person'ly. But I know from what ever'body says that whoever wrapped the mahogany around Hank Vaughn was a star wrapper. You ask any old-timer about Hank Vaughn and see his eyes pop. He was a rustler, bank-robber, till-burglar, about any kinds of manure you can think of. Fav'rite stunt was to walk

into a saloon, dare anybody to a two-hand stud game, set on the floor with whoever called him, stick his sheath knife by his leg, run aces out of his sleeve till the other feller was riled so's to reach fer his iron, and then Hank Vaughn'd pling him. You ask any old-timer—say, here's Mr. Stahlberg again. Hey, Mr. Stahlberg, you knowed Hank Vaughn, didn't you? All right; tell the boys about the critter!"

IV

"DID I know Hank Vaughn?" Mr. Stahlberg grunted that out, along with a hearty laugh, as he crowded between the two young men again. He reached for the whisky bottle, poured and drank. He set the empty glass down slowly, his innocent, kindly eyes two specks of shining blue above his huge red cheeks, as he gazed at Curly, at Art, and then at the change from a double-eagle which glittered in a silver heap on the bar. "Did I, Benjamin A. Stahlberg, know Hank Vaughn?" He spat violently over his shoulder, glanced swiftly over the restless groups of cowboys, then jabbed the black, horny spike of a rope-burned thumbnail against his tremendous chest. "Better ask if they's nothin' I *don't* know about Hank Vaughn! Why, you yearlin's is lookin' at and listenin' to the one and the same man who was brung up from the Pecos Valley by the Prineville Vigilantes to put the fixin's to Hank Vaughn, the deadeest-shootin', hell-raisin'est and most vener-
mous sourbelly who ever riled the Ochoco! They brung me up to these parts on account of the reppitation I'd got from creasin' Billy the Kid. Yes, sir; them's two of the happenin's of my eventful life that make me fergit my kidney and other troubles when I think of 'em—my

creasin' of Bill the Kid, and my terrifyin' gun battle with the venermous deadshot, Hank Vaughn!"

"The bartender must of been mixed up," said Art, as Mr. Stahlberg paused to pour another drink. "He—"

"Hush and hearken!" commanded Mr. Stahlberg sternly. "I am in one of my humors. When I git in one of my humors all must hush and hearken till my humor is gone. You intelligent young fellers want to hear what it is to be a buckaroo. So you stand quiet and still fer a spell, and I'll roll the whole damn' old cattle country back afore yore eyes. Hush and hearken, that's all."

"He means for you to shut up," admonished Curly, as Mr. Stahlberg drank and poured again. "So you do it."

Art wanted to say he guessed it was his double-eagle Mr. Stahlberg was drinking down, but he decided it was no use. Curly was bound to be a darn fool again. Besides, it might be an exciting story. This certainly was a good place for one. The barroom was dimly lighted. Cowboys kept stumping in and out, ordering drinks, making a rattle of talk as they argued about horses and cows, damned sheep and homesteaders, sprang sells on one another, and nickered and haw-hawed. The room had a horse-and-cow smell that mixed well with the smells of whisky, beer and cigarettes. Mr. Stahlberg's voice sank into a low, soothing rumble, as he began his tale. Out of it the life of an amazing past began to sing into Art's ears. He forgot the despised cow hands of Eastern Washington, his dreams of city life, Curly making a darn fool of himself—he forgot, also, the sinister figure of Slickear Bill reposing in the corner shadows. . . .

"Now, then," said Mr. Stahlberg, "what's the sense of a man blushin' and actin' modest over a plain, honest fact about hisself? Benjamin A. Stahlberg has never been the man to hide any kind of facts. I've told you intelligent young fellers the facts about my kidney troubles, and I'm a-goin' to tell you the unblushin' facts about me bein' such a famous cowpoke in my young days, 'specially with the shootin' iron. How I come to play the part I did with Billy the Kid and Hank Vaughn. Not to mention Buffalo Bill. It's no way surprisin' when you come to look at all the facts.

"There's the facts about what I done in the Civil War. I volunteered when I was no more'n sixteen. I had sech a born talent fer makin' lead foller my look I was star sharpshooter of my corps in less'n a month. I ain't got the humor now to tell you the facts of the Civil War, and I only mentioned it on account of that was where I invented creasin'. Yes, sir, I'm the man who invented it!

"I don't aim to brag on it, creasin' come so nacheral. The idy was to draw a bead on the back of a rebel's head, just above the neck. I'd fire then, and down would go Johnny Reb, but only knocked out, showin' no more'n a bullet burn on his skin. No self-respectin' creaser ever drawed blood. I must of brung down five hundred rebels, and I only drawed blood twice that I know of.

"After the war I went to Texas, like so many other old soldiers, to help start the cattle business. The chaparral jungles was full of wild Spanish cattle and mustangs then. The longhorns was a terror to rope, corral, tame and herd, and it was well-nigh impossible to round up mustangs. The only way they could be caught was by creasin', and I state it as a simple fact that I was the only man fer the job.

"Way I worked was to hide in a tree by a water hole, and when a band of mustangs come to drink I'd crease as many as twenty afore they'd git away into the jungles. Down I'd scramble, and I'd hobble all the stunned critters afore they'd come to. You go to Texas to-day and ask 'em who was the greatest creaser that ever rode the chaparral. Any old-timer'll tell you, 'Why, certainly nobody but Benjamin A. Stahlberg!' They never give me a nickname. I was always looked on with too much respect fer that.

"The Civil War and Texas warn't the only places I made a reppitation as a creaser, neither. No, sir. There was the great plains of the North." Mr. Stahlberg poured another drink, swallowed it, smacked his lips ardently, and his voice was solemn and slow as he went on. "There was me and Buffalo Bill. That time."

"You—and—Buffalo—Bill!" Curly's voice shook with awe.

"Yep. Us. I made a monkey out of him. I made a bet with him I could outshoot him on buffalo. We run a herd and the critters fell like mowed hay. When the shootin' was over the count showed Buffalo Bill one critter to the good and he claimed the money.

"'Wait ten minutes,' I says, ca'm and cool.

"Buffalo Bill did, and he about died with surprise when he saw one after another of the buffalo I'd brung down climb up and stagger away. I'd creased ever' one, never drawed a drop of buffalo blood. Buffalo Bill had to admit he was outshot, and I took the money.

"And that warn't all. I'm comin' now to the creasin' that really counted. I'm tellin' you now how I creased the famous Billy the Kid, how I was the unknowin'

cause of his untimely end, and how I was brung to this country to clean it of the buzzard, Hank Vaughn.

V

"I NEVER aimed to do Billy the Kid no harm. I couldn't help his *señorita* goin' mad over me, no more'n I could help the fifty or more other *señoritas* who'd done it afore." Mr. Stahlberg paused for another drink. Sentiment shone in the glance he bestowed on the red liquor. "Jest somethin' I could never help. . . .

"How it come was that old John Chisum heerd how I'd made a monkey of Buffalo Bill, and he sent fer me to come down to New Mexico and stop the Lincoln County cattle war. I creased along, settlin' it slow but sure, when that *señorita* had to get smitten on me and I had to get some smitten on her. Ever' night I'd brush up my sombrero, tie my best silk scarf around my neck, and ride down to meet the *señorita* in the moonlight. I'd take along my geetar, and we'd set out in the moonlight, under a cottonwood, and I'd play and sing till we got romantic. I even made up a song about her. I called it 'The Chisholm Trail.' It was quite a love song acshuly."

"Why, I've heard 'The Chisholm Trail,' " said Art, "and it's about chasin' a squaw up a hill, and I'll ketch her, by God, I will, or something like that, and a lot of yippy-yi-yayin'—"

"I'm speakin' of *my* song, and not none about no squaws!" said Mr. Stahlberg sternly. "Young man, you hush and hearken!"

"Yes. For crim'ny's sake shut up and have some sense!" said Curly irritably. "I'm appreciatin' this story."

"Well, I was settin' with the *señorita* one night in the cottonwoods, singin' her 'The Chisholm Trail,' " Mr. Stahlberg went on, "and she was cooin' it back at me in the love-sickin'est tones, when here come her little brother up the gulch, jabberin' in Spanish that Billy the Kid had called and wanted to know where was his true love. The *señorita* screamed. Then she threwed her arms around my neck and begged me to take to my hoss and run. I wouldn't do it, and of course she fainted. I let her lay, fer already I saw a man's shape weavin' and snakin' along from the shadders back of the doby house. I bit off a chew, and waited.

"I never even drawed afore I stepped out into the moonlight and in sight of Billy the Kid. The light no more'n struck one side of me when I saw the Kid stop short and flash his hand down. It was no use. Pore Billy Bonney! Afore his gun was above his hip I'd britched my hog-leg Colt and snapped the hammer. Billy the Kid was creased. His gun dropped, but he never did. He only stooped over to pick up his weepun. That shows how tough Billy the Kid was, fer the crease was fair and honest, but he was never even knocked off his feet. I whammed at the back of his head again. That crease only made him stoop lower; never even made him stagger. A third crease made him lean on his hands to keep from goin' down. The fourth crease sent him to his knees, with his back saggin'; and it took the fifth honest and fair crease to drop him on his belly, roll him over on his back and leave him knocked out and still.

"I reloaded my Colt, mounted my hoss, and rode back to the Chisum Ranch. What was my sorrer and grief the next mornin' to learn I'd been the innercent cause of pore Billy Bonney's death. The Kid had come

to hisself enough to get up and stagger to the ranch-house, but he was still too rumdum from his terrible creasin' to know where he was at. So he was easy pickin's fer Sheriff Pat Garrett, who was stashed in the house and layin' fer him. There, in the dark, Billy the Kid, who had notches on his Colt fer twenty-one men, met his fate. And I was to blame. The *señorita* would never speak to me agin. It was part on Billy's account, and part because I'd fergot and left her layin' out in the cottonwoods.

"Well, a *señorita* more or less didn't make any difference to me, but I shorely did feel bad about pore, young Billy Bonney. I asked all my friends to keep it a secret how I'd creased him, and to never let on when talk was made about the five bullet burns that was found on the back of Billy's head. They was loyal, but ever'body in the cattle country knowed Benjamin A. Stahlberg was the only creaser who could 'a' put 'em there so neat. The news grapevined around, and my reppitation was bigger'n ever. So that was how I come to be sent for by the Prineville Vigilantes, to put a quietus on Hank Vaughn, who, if he was allowed to go much farther, would be threatenin' Crook County, Oregon, as bad as Billy the Kid had been threatenin' the peace of Lincoln County, New Mexico.

VI

"I HEARKENED to the call. My only idy was to make peace. It made me sick to think of another cattle war like the one in Lincoln County, which had cost more'n two thousand fine men their lives. But I reached the Central Oregon country about a month too late. A war was already started. The Vigilantes was made up of big owners. Small owners and fellers who was gen-

er'ly supposed to be rustlers had organized into a gang called the Moonlighters. There had been one battle in the Prineville streets that shot up the town. There had been a lot more shootin's and lynchin's, both in town and on the range. The mornin' I rode my white mustang across the old wood bridge over the Ochoco I saw nine dead men danglin' from a stringer. Then I begin to realize what a tough job of creasin' was ahead of me. When I heerd that Hank Vaughn had joined the Moonlighters as their boss gunfighter I turned about sick. But I never flinched. I was bound to stop the war, even if I had to shed blood. I wasn't goin' to have no Lincoln County in Oregon.

"Yes, sir, I'd fell right in love with the country, and they was nothin' I wouldn't do fer it. You young fellers ought to seen this country then! It warn't half grazed; no sheep or homesteaders; all cattle and cattlemen and the life of the cow trails. Yes, sir!"

Emotion flushed Mr. Stahlberg's cheeks a deeper red. He poured two drinks and drank them before he went on. His eyes had a warmer glow now. His voice shook with feeling. Curly Crick was like a statue, motionless on Mr. Stahlberg's right side. Even Art had forgotten to gaze wistfully at his diminishing heap of change.

"It was born to be a cattle country, my lads, and as a cattle country she had growed. Prineville started in '67. Wild longhorns had ranged through Californy, and across the High Desert. *Vaqueros* had follered 'em on. Yes, sir, the early cow trails here knowed many a *Mexicano* ridin' a mustang along, with little bells jinglin' from the brim of a sombrero that had come from far away, far away in the South. There was the Californy cattle barons—one built a reg'lar *casa grande* here fer his young bride, and you'd see

'em out ridin' in a shiny rig behind two ther'breds in silver-trimmed harness. The country was richer'n hell. Bunchgrass fer a thousand times as many cattle as was feedin' over the mountains and the flats between the Strawberry and Burnt Ranges and the Siskiyoues. The grass growed so tall and thick the cattle bedded themselves on it at night. It stayed rich and juicy under the snow, and the cattle only had to paw fer winter feed.

"Then pore and ambitious men begin to come into the Central Oregon country, to work fer rich owners. At first the only brands was earmarks, and the unmarked critter was called a slickear. It was easy pickin's fer a pore, ambitious man with a saddle, a rope and a sharp sheath knife to start a herd of his own. That got to be the style so much that even the brandin' iron and registered brands couldn't stop it. So the big owners organized the Vigilantes.

"Whenever a Vigilante caught a pore, ambitious man working over a brand or an earmark he didn't start shootin' it out on the ground. What he done was to wait till night, then light a fire on the top of a butte close to his ranchhouse. The other Vigilantes would ride fer the fire, all armed with rifles and Colts. Then they would round up the pore, ambitious man, try him, and lynch him. Usually the lynchin' was done in Prineville from the old wood bridge. The body would be left hangin' as a warnin' to other pore men who felt theirselves gettin' too ambitious.

"Now I'm gittin' back to Hank Vaughn. He was one of the porest men who ever come to Prineville, but he wasn't ambitious enough to brand a slickear if it was to come and set in his lap. He was vicious and ventermous enough to even work, though, if work was considered ornery and mean. So when this hellion learnt what was considered the worst deviltry around

Prineville, he set out to start a herd of cattle fer himself, even though it was work.

"Well, the Vigilantes tried lynchin' Hank Vaughn three times, and then they decided to quit. Fer the big owners never got no closer to him than the bullets of his repeatin' rifle and Colts would carry. So they took a vacation, until they heerd of me creasin' Billy the Kid. They sent fer me, and when they got word I was comin' they cheered up and lynched another pore man, but not Hank Vaughn.

"That last lynchin' was what caused the organizin' of the Moonlighters. The pore, ambitious men of the country didn't have any more use fer outlaws than the big owners did; they claimed they was as respectable as anybody, and that if it was a case of thieves, why, it was just little thieves agin big thieves, and visy versy. So one night they organized the Moonlighters in Prineville. The Vigilantes knowed all about it, fer one of their men was in the loft over the hall where the leaders were app'inted and the bloody oaths swore to; and he lit a signal fire that brought all the Vigilantes ridin' into the cattle town. There was a bloody battle in the streets, but all that come of it was wounds and killin's. Nothin' was settled. Instead, that battle was just the start of the war. Hank Vaughn spoke fer the Moonlighters and dared the Vigilantes to come on. They laid low fer two weeks, then made a sudden foray, caught nine Moonlighters, and hung them from the old wood bridge.

"The next mornin' I rode into Prineville on my white mustang."

VII

MR. STAHLBERG halted his story. He drank again and gnawed a huge chew from a long plug of Star.

He wiped his mouth with the back of his thick hand, shook his head sadly, and vowed he didn't know whether he could go on or not. What followed, he said, was the first actual blood-shedding he'd been guilty of since his first months of sharp-shooting in the Civil War. He'd never had any human blood on his hands since that terrible battle with Hank Vaughn, and he ought to feel innocent, as Hank Vaughn had deserved what he got, but human blood was human blood, and it still made him sick to think of it. The only reason that bound him to go on with the story was his main principle of never hiding any facts about himself. So he guessed he'd tell the main facts of the battle, but he'd leave out the details. He poured another drink.

"Don't bother about details, Mr. Stahlberg," said Curly. "Don't bother with 'em, for I don't like details, and neither does my friend."

Curly was ghostly pale, he was so excited. Art leaned his elbows on the bar, and wistfully regarded the silver before him. He decided that he didn't care for details, either, as he watched Mr. Stahlberg take two more drinks. The bartender set up two glasses of beer and removed sixty-five cents from the heap of change. Art sighed, but he urged Mr. Stahlberg to go on with the story.

"Well, to leave out the details and make it short," said Mr. Stahlberg, "I tackled five Moonlighters my first day in Prineville and creased ever' one of 'em. It spread over the country like wildfire that the famous creaser was in town to end the cattle war, and all the Moonlighters took to their holes. All but Hank Vaughn. He luffed at the stories about creasin', and boasted and bragged that he was a driller and could

make any creaser that ever britched a Colt bite the dust.

"I was drinkin' in the Rawhide Saloon, when word was brung me that Hank Vaughn was in town, tearin' from saloon to saloon, and bawlin' wherever he went:

" 'Where's that creaser? Let him show hisself! I'm Hank Vaughn, the driller! Show me a creaser! A driller always thirsts fer creaser blood!'

"Inside of three seconds all the Vigilantes who'd been drinkin' with me, pattin' me on the back and tellin' how they'd fight till they dropped by my side, was gone down the back alley. I stood by the bar alone, as even the bartender had took to the cellar. I never moved as I watched the front door. I just leaned on my left elbow, let my right hand dangle so's the fingers touched the handle of my right-side iron, and watched the door. I saw the door move slow, my fingers edged down—then, lightnin' quick, the door swung open, two guns cracked, smoke fogged from two muzzles, and there we stood, Benjamin A. Stahlberg and Hank Vaughn, the creaser and the driller, face to face!

"I felt my heart begin to pound. I'd creased him honest and fair, but he'd never even stooped! Here was a man tougher'n even Billy the Kid! Yes, sir, my heart begun to pound and my hair begun to curl as I realized that here I'd prob'ly have to shed blood. But not if I could help it. I'd try the crease some more.

"All that went in a kind of flash through my head between first and second shots. They come too fast fer any real thinkin'. I reckon that in all sixshooter history no two men ever drewed and showered down so fast. Nobody could 'a' counted the shots, but I fired ever' one to crease and not to kill. And ever' bullet did crease Hank Vaughn, and done it in just the flash

afore Hank Vaughn fired hisself. Not a crease staggered him, but ever' one ruint his aim. So we was both on our feet when the four Colts was empty of their twenty shots. Hank Vaughn was half-way up the bar-room, havin' stepped with each shot. Ten creases had burnt all the hair from the sides and back of his head. He throwed down his guns, a-cussin' as he throwed, out with sheath knife, a-cussin' as it come, and then, cussin' and faunchin', he jumped fer my bowels.

"Warn't that a fix fer a man whose bowels make as good a target as mine? That's what you young fellers are thinkin'. Well, they didn't make sech a bulge at that time of my life; in fact, they acshuly leaned in, 'stead of bulgin' out. Besides, I was a first-rate knife-dodger, just about as good at that as I was at creasin'. I dodged Hank's knife p'int, just kind of eased my innards back so that only my shirt was cut, then I out with my own knife, locked it in his'n; and then it was around and around, all over that barroom floor, both our right arms up at an angle, stiff as wagon tongues, pumpin' down, up, down, so fast it must have looked like the flash of the wings of a racin' windmill; pumpin' up, pumpin' down, neither givin' in; around and around, till the knife steel could stand no more, and both blades snapped from the hafts!

"Hank Vaughn then come at me with swingin' fists. You know what that is to an old cowpoke? Dogfightin'—that's what he calls it, and an old-time cowpoke'll die afore he'll dogfight. I wouldn't lift my fists agin Hank Vaughn. I leaned agin a stack of beer kegs, and let him swing. Bang-wham—bang-wham—ten times in all he swung on my jaw; and I simply stood and took all the bang-whams and showed my contempt fer dog-fightin' by not even blinkin' an eye.

"If he hadn't been such a miser'ble venter'ous sour-belly, he'd 'a' got ashamed of hisself. But Hank Vaughn didn't have shame in him. He never stopped his dogfightin' on account of my contemp', but on account of his seein' that hammerin' my jaw was no more use'n hammerin' an anvil. He give up a-pantin'.

"'Creaser!' he growled, pantin' hard. 'Creaser, we gone so fur in this battle we can't quit now! How air we a-goin' on? We failed to shoot each other, or knife each other, or to dogfight each other down. What we got left to fight with? Creaser, you say!'

"'Driller!' I spoke to him ca'm and slow. 'Driller, you've fergot the rope. Driller, we're a-goin' to rope 'er out!'

"'Creaser, yer on!' said Hank Vaughn.

"Well, sir, young fellers, you may not believe it, but at last I was stirred to a blood-sheddin' pitch. I'd done my best to keep from sheddin' Hank Vaughn's so far, and this was how he appreciated it. He was simply bound to come to an ontimely end at my hands and leave his blood on my head. It had to be; there was nothin' else fer it; so at last I let myself bust loose and begun to snort fer blood.

"I was on my snow-white mustang first. I saw Hank Vaughn mountin' his coal-black stallion. I remembered the law of the old *vaquero* rope duels down South, and I loped down the street to where we could have a good hundred yards between us fer the charge. When I turned my mustang, I saw Hank Vaughn, settin' straight and quiet on his black stallion. A coil of rope swung from his hand. I swung my rope free and give the mustang the spurs. The black stallion was lungin' down the road. I kneed the mustang for him on a dead line. The stallion loomed up like a cloud. I saw Hank's arm swing. His rope snaked

through the air. The mustang left the road in a sideways jump. Hank's loop sailed by just as my own settled on his shoulders, jerked tight around his neck. The mustang whirled on his hind legs, plunged against the rope. I heard a heavy thud behind. I expected Hank to be jerked loose from his stallion. But his legs still held the hoss in an iron clamp as I drug on fer the wood bridge. Tough! That Hank Vaughn!"

"Lord-dee!" sighed Curly Crick, as Mr. Stahlberg paused for another drink. "Wonderful! Why, that's *better'n* I ever read about!"

"Wait'll you hear it all," commanded Mr. Stahlberg. He drank, and held up the empty glass, regarding it with a tremendous frowning gaze, a gaze which he seemed to concentrate with great effort. He solemnly smacked his lips. His eyelids blinked. His right foot slipped off the brass rail, and Mr. Stahlberg seemed to sag. But his jaw set, finally, in his determination to tell the last facts of his terrible battle. The rumble of his voice was thickened as he spoke again, but he spoke.

"It was a mile to the old wood bridge. And, with my mustang draggin' him by the neck, that Hank Vaughn still kep' his legs clamped around his black stallion and drug the hoss ever' inch of the way! And when I swung him from a stringer, still he wouldn't let the stallion go! There he hung by the neck, and the stallion hangin' from his clamped legs. Yes, sir, there Hank Vaughn hung, him and the stallion, and it was three days afore he'd give up, admit he was licked honest and fair, let hisself be choked, and die the death of a range thief and a hellion. And not till then did he let his leg-holt go of the stallion! Yes, sir, Hank Vaughn was tough, that venermous old sourbelly was, and it took a Benjamin A. Stahlberg

to give him his needin's. I've told you all the plain, simple facts of how I fixed Hank Vaughn—"

"Who?" A voice behind Mr. Stahlberg queried harshly. "*Who* was you a-sayin' fixed Hank Vaughn?"

Mr. Stahlberg's vast bulk shrank like an emptied gunny sack, as he turned from the bar. The two startled young men turned with him. They faced the steely glitter from the lone eye of Slickear Bill.

VIII

"STAHLBERG, you never shot any more'n a sheep in all yore days!" The words were spoken so low that the thin lips hardly moved, but Art shivered. He thought of icicles cracking. "Tryin' to snare cattle-feeders with yer windy lies, Stahlberg? Tell these yere young men who it acshuly was wrapped the mahogany around Hank Vaughn. I'm after a couple cattle-feeders myself."

"I already told 'em!" the bartender bawled across the bar. "I told 'em it was you, Mr. Oglethorpe."

"I never argy," said Mr. Stahlberg, showing the whites of his eyes as he looked sidewise at Slickear Bill. "I never have argied, and I don't aim to begin it at this late day and age. Have it yore own way. Besides, it's time fer me to go take my kidney medicine."

Mr. Stahlberg spoke the last words over his big right shoulder, as he stubbed in an unsteady but rapid stride from the barroom.

"Why, the old red-faced barrel of hot air!" cried Art, indignantly raking the remnants of his change from the bar. "I knowed he was lyin' about a man hangin' for three days and holdin' a horse between his

legs at the same time, and I bet all the rest of it was a lie, too!"

"I reckon," said Slickear Bill. "It gener'ly is."

"Well, Curly," said Art, "I guess you're satisfied now I told you the truth. I guess you're sick of this country now."

"No," said Curly dismally, "I'm sick, but not of the country."

"That's right, young feller!" Slickear Bill tried to work a grin on to his hard-bitten face. "There ain't no finer country nowheres fer a couple of ambitious young men, and there ain't no finer life. I been combin' the town fer two days lookin' fer a likely pair of cattle-feeders. You're the first I've struck. That feller Stahlberg would 'a' ruint you. I'll make you into a couple real cowboys. You come along with me to the Jay Eye See."

"Will there be chances for promotion?" asked Curly.

"You bet! Why, you'll likely have a herd of yore own in a year. You just string along with old Slickear! But don't you listen to what any of these yere cow hands say about me. They're all nacheral liars. I ain't a-tellin' you no stories. You won't hear me a-braggin' about wrappin' the mahogany around Hank Vaughn or anybody else. All I'm sayin' is if you want to start in the cattle business you come along with me. I never see likelier lookin' young men."

"I'm a-goin', ' said Curly shortly.

"Curly, you darn fool—"

Art cut his protest short as he felt the steely glitter of Slickear Bill's eye fall on him. He reflected that here *was* the man who'd killed Hank Vaughn . . . anyway the old range boss wasn't a windbag and a bragger like Mr. Stahlberg . . . and it was better to

put in the winter on a ranch than quit Curly . . . and certainly next spring Curly would have a bellyful and some sense. . . .

"Well, I guess I'll go too," Art said sadly.

IX

THE next morning they were riding on a wagonload of winter supplies. Slickear Bill swayed in the seat before them. The two young men still argued.

"Why do you keep tellin' me they're all liars? What do I care? Didn't I know Mr. Stahlberg was a liar all the time? Didn't I tell you he was right at the first?"

"Maybe you did, but you swallowed his big lie a lot more'n I did."

"I never neither! I had a mighty good idy all along he never killed Hank Vaughn."

"You thought he was a creaser, though. I could tell the way you looked."

"I was just int'rested in the *idy* of creasin', that was all. I was thinkin' how I could maybe be a creaser some day myself."

"You a creaser! Curly, you darn fool—"

The argument was silenced by the spectacle of Slickear Bill buckling a cartridge belt around his waist. He tapped the holster of a big Colt, he turned his head, and his one eye snapped wickedly at the two young men.

"From now on you call me Mr. Oglethorpe," he snapped. "And you just *try* runnin' away!"

"There now!" whispered Art. "Now, I hope you're satisfied!"

"I am," said Curly, also whispering. "I've always wanted to meet an actually tough gunfighter."

"You pore idiot, he'd as soon kill us as look at us!

He's a venomous old hornet, if I ever saw one!"

"He's just the kind of man I come up here to meet!"

It was simply no use, Art thought bitterly; the darn fool was bound to be satisfied with everything in the cattle country, no matter what it was. Like as not, he'd be as crazy as ever in the spring.

The two young men were taken to the worst two-man feed camp in Central Oregon. It was in a lonesome, bleak, wind-swept hole north of Burnt Ranch. There were three hundred head of steers to haul hay for, and they had to be watered from a couple of wooden washtubs and a hand pump. The miserable life embittered Art forever against cow brutes and cowmen. His hopes for Curly faded utterly as the winter dragged on. The darn fool sank lower every day. He got so he would talk about nothing but Mr. Stahlberg's story; he declared at last that he didn't care if it was a lie, it was fine to dream about and imagine; and in the end he seemed to have convinced himself that it all actually happened.

"I wish there'd be another Moonlighter and Vigilante war," he said one night, after a long silence. "Now that I'm gettin' to be a first-rate cowboy, I'd like a chance at a man like Hank Vaughn."

"You'd like to be like that old hornet, Mr. Oglethorpe, huh?" said Art contemptuously.

"No. I was thinkin' of Mr. Stahlberg. I'd like to be a creaser. I'm goin' to learn it soon as I can buy a gun."

"Lord, Curly, I wish you'd forget them lies of his. Why he even lied about his kidney trouble. Here he's gone and been operated on his bladder. You ought to learn some sense."

"Art, you'll never understand," said Curly.

Art decided that he never would and that he didn't want to. He was so sick of blizzards, feeding fool steers, thawing the pump, baching, living on bacon, sourdough biscuits, beans and canned tomatoes, he felt ready to die. He had faint hope, however, that Curly would have any sense in the spring.

And in the spring he tramped the hundred miles to Prineville alone. The best friend he'd ever had had turned into the darnedst fool alive. Curly had taken his winter's wages, bought a motheaten broncho, a saddle that was about to fall into pieces, and a Smith & Wesson .38 that shot every way but straight, and declared he was going out to the wild-horse country and maybe crease himself a fine stallion. The darn fool, he knew Mr. Stahlberg was a liar, but he let the lies have that effect on him just the same. . . .

Art tramped mournfully down the lonely road. He felt pretty tough about breaking up with Curly. The way they'd rassled around down there in the Columbia Railroad camp. And now he was bound to end up by fooling away after strawtails, or shoving cattle into the Forest Reserve later in the spring, packing out salt and looking for strays all summer. Settling down like that to live among evil-minded, lying cow hands.

The darn fool.

X

THE ROMANCES of Mr. Stahlberg wreck young friendships no more. They are buried in the past, like the heroic life from which they flowered. Mr. Stahlberg sweeps and scrubs a pool-hall and empties spittoons of chocolate bar and chewing gum wrappers to live. The stranger who notices him will hear only a catalogue of aches and pains. There is nothing else for

Mr. Stahlberg. If he were to revive his romances here the young ranch hands might listen in the moments when they chalked their cues, but they would never understand. A blight has fallen on their life, but they do not know, or care. Here lies the romantic West.

DYNO RED THE MINER

I

A. P. CARVER wearily dragged his feet as he tramped away from the headframe of the Pluto Mine. His feet were old and the hobnailed brogans were painful weights on their aching bones. The others of the day shift were stringing ahead of him, descending to the town. It was already twilight, for March days are mighty short in the deep canyon of the South Fork of the Cœur d'Alene River. A wind was roaring and whining down from the snow drifts on the mountain tops, and the old miner hugged his mackinaw tightly around his wet digging clothes as he dragged on. The frosty wind cut miserably into the skin of a body just out of the hot thousand-foot drift. A. P. Carver's back was sore, and his blistered hands throbbed with pain. The drip, drip, drip from the stope roof still beat in his ears. His head still ached from the smells of burning carbide and exploded giant powder. Even the vision of the hours ahead, with shots of redeye to warm and cheer, with a hot supper after that, then a couple of pipe smokes, and finally a blessed rest in a warm bed—even that prospect was little consolation.

A. P. Carver was an old miner now. One week ago he had been an old saloon-keeper. His saloon was part of the famous history of silver-lead mining in the Cœur d'Alenes of Idaho. A. P. was the bard of the

diggings. All of the romance of Western mining blazed in his head, and, on payday nights, when his bartenders were serving a roaring crowd, when he had a proper audience, that romance poured from under his heroic mustache in a glowing stream. But the day of the bard was vanishing, even as the day of the hero and history-maker was already vanished. The custom of A. P. Carver declined, as young miners were drawn to gaudier bars. His once-famous collection—the photographs of lynchings, the grisly nooses, the handcuffs, the old revolvers, the blood-stained knives, the cases with ore-samples from famous mines, the cases with invitations to public hangings, the cases with boots, blood-smeared bits of clothing, and shriveled fingers which were souvenirs of desperadoes who had died by the rope—these had no charms for the tender-souled race of young miners. They called his saloon a joint, a dismal hell-hole. A. P. Carver was no man for change. He grimly cherished the atmosphere of the old times, he continued to sing the old times to his decreasing trade, until a mortgage threatened. Then, when he attempted to compromise with the new times, Jop Sloan and Dyno Red had to meet again in his saloon. That was calamity. And so A. P. Carver was back where he had started in 1870 on the Comstock Lode. He was toiling for day-wages again in a stope of a great mine.

To-night was the first time since the calamity that shots of redeye had given him enough courage to go to his boarding house by way of his old saloon. He was intensely amazed by the ramshackle appearance of the ancient, square-fronted building. Somehow he had never before noticed how badly the right front corner sagged on its rotting foundation, or how generally the brown paint was scaled on the square front,

or how dim the letters were on the weatherbeaten sign, A. P. CARVER SALOON. In the thickening twilight the curtains of the side windows were as musty and drab as decaying moss. The old ex-owner pressed his face against a pane of glass and strained his eyes in a stare through the gap between the curtains. It was nearly dark inside. But the shadows cleared enough for him to see the bare wall where his sinister collection had been displayed so long under his affectionate eyes. Ten years ago he had been offered five thousand for it. Now the mortgage company allowed him two hundred. The old life had ceased to count. The two poker tables and the chairs were gone. The sagging bar and the cracked mirror fixtures were undisturbed. Likely nobody would take them as a gift. But the sight brought a lump to A. P. Carver's whisky-heated throat. His eyes were misty as they turned to the padlock on the scarred door. His lips trembled, under the great, drooping mustache.

"A ruint man," he muttered. "A gnarled, wrinkled, rheumatic, stooped, stove-up old workin' stiff—that's A. P. Carver fer the rest of his days. Then the black bottle in a hospittle. Well, hell."

The doors rattled and the old shack groaned as the canyon wind blew harder. A ruin it was, like himself, abandoned to loneliness and decay.

"And to think the calamity fell on account of Dyno Red!" said A. P. Carver dolefully to the padlocked door. "Him, of all! Why, I made him famous from Mexico to Nome, the way I used to tell the life of Dyno Red! After that, for him to be my ruin! I wish to the Lord," said A. P. Carver peevishly, as he shuffled away from the dead saloon, "that I had been borned with more bizness in my head and less imagination. . . ." He shambled on. . . .

Hours later the creak and rattle of the saloon sign-board sounded ghostly to Pete Repp, timberman, as he felt his way unsteadily over the shrouded sidewalk. And his alcoholic fancy evoked the ghosts of the saloon's old life. Pete Repp saw himself leaning against Carver's bar . . . the dim lights glimmered on a red scalp with big rusty freckles winking through straggles of gray hair . . . he saw bulging gray eyes staring with an expression of innocence from under shaggy eyebrows . . . he heard words rolling in a slow but unbroken stream from under the immense sweeping mustache—once again the heroic story of Dyno Red the Miner charmed Pete Repp's ears. And to think that Dyno Red and Jop Sloan had actually met up right here in the end! By God, it about knocked you cold, the things that happened in a mining country! He'd never get over it. . . . Poor old A. P. . . . Pete Repp staggered on, among the ghosts of an old life. . . .

II

THE BARDS of the old West all told stories of tremendous frays fought on such even terms that they ended with the exhaustion of both contestants, without either defeat or victory. Such Homeric contests soon flowered vastly into legend. The names of the battlers, the dates, the places, the causes, the incidents of the battles were always violently disputed among the bards. Some denied the actual glory of the never-ending battle between Jop Sloan and Dyno Red the Miner. On the other hand, it was heartily affirmed, sometimes with violent blood-letting. In A. P. Carver's version Dyno Red was the hero of the combat that never ended.

Dyno Red belonged—as the story was told in the A. P. Carver Saloon—to a family whose men had been Presbyterian preachers for generations. His years were eighteen when he struck the Comstock Lode. Even then his deeply set gray eyes glittered under a relentless frown that never relaxed from his thick, brick-colored eyebrows. He was short and wiry. Muscles quivered in ridges under the skin of a bull neck and in knots over out-thrust jaws. His voice was low, but he grated and chopped his words so that listeners always had the sense of being peppered and stung. So Dyno Red the Miner was described by A. P. Carver, who had been a Comstocker in his earlier years.

“Dyno Red the Miner was Presbyterian in his soul,” A. P. Carver always informed his audience when he told the story on payday nights. “I learnt that the time he got his two fingers blowed off. I ’tended him and he told me confidential about his fambly then. He said his father was a Presbyterian preacher, and he said, along with a lot of cussin’, that his three older brothers was Presbyterian preachers as well. He talked mighty free, for him.

“‘Yes, sir, Carver, and I got two sisters who married Presbyterian preachers!’ said Dyno Red. ‘You don’t know what it is to be brung up by six Presbyterian preachers, Carver! I do, by God! The brother next to me was the worst, the psalm-singin’ bastard! He’s a dead-ringer for me in looks, but I ain’t like him no other way, thank hell! With me Sunday-schooled and churched sick by my damn’ fambly that-away, you can figger how I burnt to get even with the outfit some time. And I did, when I was fifteen. One night I got a few dollars and a bundle of clothes together, set fire to the Presbyterian church, and

started West to be a desperado. I ain't never been one yet. But give me time. . . .'

"I knowed exactly how the pore kid felt," A. P. Carver always said, in narrating this part of the story. "I tried to draw him out some more, but it was no use. Instead of tellin' me all he'd done afore hittin' the famous silver town of Virginia City, he took a streak of swearin', and cusswords was all I could get out of him. Very solemn swearin' it was, solemn and powerful. Dyno Red, when he got to cussin' his best, would about set your hair on fire.

"I was a timberman in the Consolidated Virginia then, in the fifteen-hundred-foot level. It was the hottest and wettest one of the great mine. Dyno Red was in the reduction works for awhile afore I met him, then he got on in the mine proper as a powder-monkey. He was put on my shift and in my level and I soon got to know him well. One of the first remarks I ever made about him was that he was such a wonderful sober and serious cusser that if he was ever to reverse his profanity what a great Presbyterian preacher he would make! I shorely hit the nail on the head.

"Yes, sir, he sounded in his cussin' exactly like a revivalist pronouncin' damnation on unrepentant sinners. He'd think of more profane names to call the heat than there is feathers on a goose. He'd call the mine drip more profane names than you could shake a stick at. And as for his fuses, giant and caps, why, when he turned loose on them it was such a prairie hailstorm of redhot cusswords all you wanted to do was to cover up, duck and run! Nobody objected to the cussin' itself, as it was gener'ly the style on the Comstock, and a first-class cusser was much admired. But ever'body on the graveyard shift in the fifteen-hundred-foot level of the Consolidated Virginia did ob-

ject to the *seriousness* of Dyno Red's cussin', which made it sound so much like the damnations of a Presbyterian revivalist.

"What I'm tellin' you is to show what Dyno Red acshuly was in his soul. If Jop Sloan'd understood him like I did he'd knowed better'n to ever took any liberties with the man. Yes, sir, it was nothin' but Dyno Red's nacheral Presbyterianism that made him such a powerful hell-raiser in the Cœur d'Alene labor troubles, the same as it made him such a terror of a desperado over in the Bannock country, and such a powerful cusser when he was a young man of eighteen in Virginia City. His Presbyterianism was always in reverse, but it was Presbyterianism just the same. Yes, sir . . ."

Aside from the solemnity of his profanity Dyno Red was a typical powder-monkey in the Consolidated Virginia mine, exhibiting all of the powder-monkey habits and traits. He would set his giant powder on a boiler to thaw it in freezing weather, he would seize a shovel and knock the top off a box of giant so recklessly that sticks would be sliced in half. He carried loose dynamite caps with loose tobacco in his hip pocket. He always filled his pipe by shoving it into that pocket and stuffing it there. Frequently a cap was crammed in with the tobacco, and once his pipe exploded, tearing two fingers from his left hand. Luckily, he had taken the pipe from his mouth a second before. Generally a powder-monkey lost a nose and an eye when he was careless about loading his pipe.

Nobody objected to these perilous habits, for they were chronic with all true powder-monkeys. And even Dyno Red's appalling profanity was finally regarded as the natural language to use in such a hell-hole as the fifteen-hundred-foot drift. Many of the miners tried to

emulate him, but none succeeded, for none had his revival fire.

It was several months before Dyno Red's fame spread through the entire mine, and several more before he became one of the renowned characters of Virginia City. He won his fame in the mine by the public dressing down he gave a shift boss.

"It was a terror," said A. P. Carver. "My ears were blistered for a solid week." But it was his battle with Stormy Halen that spread the fame of Dyno Red all over Virginia City. Generally Dyno Red drank his redeye in the solemn and serious fashion of a deacon in communion, or with the quiet exaltation of a saved soul receiving baptism. Mostly he drank alone, standing stiffly erect before the bar, never lifting a foot to the rail, never glancing to the right or left, never opening his mouth except to solemnly order another drink.

The loafing bullies of the bars, judging Dyno Red only by his drinking demeanors, came to regard him as one of the tribe of meek and gentle souls specially created for the sport of loafers. One of the largest, noisiest and idlest of the bullies, one who called himself Stormy Halen, selected Dyno Red for his clown. The young powder-monkey ignored him until that payday night when he wore a new suit of clothes into the Squareset Saloon.

III

STORMY HALEN was drunk that night. He staggered into the Squareset just as Dyno Red was taking his first drink, standing in his usual solemn and reverent posture before the bar. His new coat was unbuttoned and hung loosely on his shoulders, the collar standing

back from his thick, brick-colored neck. Stormy Halen stopped behind him, his great fleshy body swaying, his bleary eyes blinking. Gradually his mouth slacked in a drooling grin. He tiptoed over to Dyno Red, slipped a paw over the coat collar, jerked it back and down; and by the time Dyno Red was back on a balance and turned around Stormy Halen was blowing his nose on the new coat. He bowed as he handed it back to the supposedly meek and gentle victim. Then he doubled over and haw-hawed at his tremendous joke, gasping between snorts:

"Thanky, pardner, thanky. Fergot my hank'chif—haw-haw!—and I needed a blow, so I borried yer coat. Haw-haw! It's 'bout the size of the hank'chif I gen'ly use. Haw-haw!"

"Well, sirs," said A. P. Carver, when he told the story, "I've seen many the fight in my time, but never have I seen the like of a little man swarmin' over a big one. At about the third haw-haw! Dyno Red was straddlin' the back of Stormy Halen's neck. Then he run over the big bum like a streak of lightnin'. Believe me or not, Dyno Red run headfirst down Stormy's back, shot between his legs, streaked up over his belly and buzzam, and he hammered, kicked, gouged and bit as he swarmed. Stormy staggered hither and yon, tryin' to get his hands on the wiry streak of red-headed powder-monkey, but it was no use, and fin'ly he crashed down, his head cavin' in the side of a brass spittoon. Red still swarmed him, and all of a sudden Stormy let out an 'Enough!' in a agonized bawl that was heard all over Virginia City. Dyno Red sprung to his feet. Stormy set up groanin', holdin' both hands over a bloody face. Dyno Red gazed very solemnly around the saloon crowd, and spoke in the same style:

" 'Gents, I'm a peaceable man and I never aim to harm a livin' soul, man, woman, child, or beast. But gents, when I'm pushed so far, I *remonstrate!*'

"Sayin' that, Dyno Red soberly spit out Stormy Halen's nose and walked out of the barroom like a deacon leavin' prayer meetin'.

"After that lickin' it was Nosey Halen instead of Stormy and Dyno Red had a reppitation to live up to. He took it as a duty and worked at it in the same religious earnestness he did with his cussin' and powder-monkeyin'. Yes, sir, he licked bullies like it was a dismal Chrischun duty he was doin' instead of havin' a good time. But he done it powerful well anyway. It got so nobody was surprised, even when he'd licked half a dozen at once.

"F'r example, one night I heard what I thought was a tremenjus rumpus down in Virginia City's Barbary Coast. I rushed for the noise. But all was quiet when I got there, and I only saw an old miner who was ca'mly leanin' agin a lamp post and lightin' his pipe.

" 'Where's the rumpus?' I asked the miner.

" 'Rumpus? What you talkin' of? I don't know nothin' about a rumpus.'

" 'Mean to say you never heerd all that yellin', screamin', cussin' and commotion? Mean to say nobody was a-fightin'?'

" 'Oh, I reckon you mean that noise over to Broncho Sal's jest now. That warn't what I'd call a rumpus, or even a fuss. Jest some noise, and then Dyno Red come a-walkin' out of Sal's place; he spit out a couple ears as he come, and then went on, mindin' his bizness. You could hardly call it a rumpus.'

" 'Yes, sir, that's the way it got to be. Dyno Red couldn't surprise nobody with his fightin'. He was so earnest and devout at it, was what made Dyno Red

so good a-fightin'. If he'd been satisfied, he'd of got to be the leadin' figger of Virginia City. But his preacher blood was too strong. He begin to feel the need of exhortin' and convertin', of bringin' other souls to see the light that made his own sperit blaze. Fightin' bullies warn't enough; he felt at last he had to tackle the mine-owners.

"That idy come to him when he learnt the facts of the Consolidated Virginia payin' a million and ninety thousand in dividends in one year and only ninety thousand in wages. So he begin to stand up in the meetin's of the Miners' Union and exhort like a Presbyterian revivalist agin the wicked mine-owners, and a-urgin' the miners to get out and fight. He exhorted well, too, and was the start of one strike. When it was settled an excuse was found for firin' Dyno Red and he was blacklisted on the Comstock. So he left Virginia City, licked for the time bein'. But the old fight was still blazin' in his soul, fierier than ever. All I know about him in the Bannock country is hearsay, as I didn't see him agin till he showed up in my saloon here in '88 or '9, when he come from Butte to organize unions in the silver-lead country. But I had the picture of the big Dillon hangin', and I learnt his story. It was his Presbyterianism all the time. . . ."

IV

THE DILLON VIGILANTES were organized to put down the gang of outlaws which had become so powerful and bold it was ruling the road from the Bannock mines. The meager forces of law and order had utterly failed to protect the dust-filled Wells-Fargo boxes on the stages. Posses could not be organized against the thoroughly armed and straight-shooting outlaws, and

juries would not convict them when individuals of the gang were captured and brought to trial. Too many jurymen had been slaughtered after voting for convictions. But an unbroken series of holdups made the situation unendurable. An association of Vigilantes was organized. Gunmen were imported. Secret preparations went on for a masked attack on the outlaw band. But there were many doubts. The outlaws were organized and led like a small army. Their leader ruled them with an iron hand; they followed and obeyed him with a religious devotion. It would require a desperate battle to capture a band of desperadoes under such a command. The feared chieftan was Dyno Red the Miner.

Then, one fine day there was an amazing event in the town of Dillon. A horseman appeared, riding slowly and unconcernedly down the main street. He was a wiry figure, with a thick neck, powerful jaws, ridges and knots of muscle under the skin of his face, and gray eyes gleamed fiercely and red hair shone vividly from under the stiff brim of a black hat. There was no mistaking the person, and the citizens fled for shelter, expecting the whole band of outlaws to come charging out of the hills.

But the rider dismounted in front of the hotel and stalked through its doors without glancing to the right or left. At the vacant desk he thumped the rough pine top and shouted for some one to attend him. He heard a shoe grate on the floor behind him, and turned to see the pistol of one of the imported gunmen jammed against his coat. He raised his hands at a command.

"You are offering violence to a servant of God!" His voice snapped the words. His eyes flashed.

The Vigilantes were astounded by the brazen ef-

frontery of the outlaw chief, but they were jubilant nevertheless.

"Must of thought we was the damnedest fools alive, men!" said their leader, when the protesting visitor was safely chained in jail. "Must of thought he had us buffaloed proper. Tryin' to tell us he was a Presbyterian preacher just come from Illinois to missionary to the Injuns! Ever hear of the like? Must of gone crazy. Well, he'll be gone to hell afore long, and so'll the rest of the gang. They'll be easy to haul down, without Dyno Red to boss 'em."

And the outlaws were leaderless when the Vigilantes charged them with all the power and fury of men certain of victory. Their night guards were ridden down, their camp was shot up, the sudden fusillades of revolver and rifle shots followed by screams of the wounded and dying threw the survivors into a panic, and twenty-five of them were easily captured. Three escaped to carry the news to Dyno Red, who had been visiting the mines in disguise, gathering information about gold shipments. He rode at once for Dillon, and witnessed the hanging, from one pine tree and all at one time, of the twenty-five outlaws and the wiry red-headed man who was their leader's double.

The double still protested vehemently, as the noose was placed around his neck. They were hanging a Presbyterian preacher, he shouted, one who had only come here to missionary to the Indians. Dyno Red laughed through his false beard as he heard the violent protests and saw that they were unheeded, though they puzzled the crowd. It was the first time Dyno Red had ever been known to laugh. His harsh, bitter chuckles made those next to him stare, and he hushed, until he saw his double's bound legs kicking convulsively

among the jerking and quivering forms of the twenty-five outlaws. The supposed leader had been strung up last of all. The eyes of the watchers shone dully as they stared at the grisly spectacle, and they licked their dry lips with dry tongues. Dyno Red departed.

He rode into the hills. On a lofty summit he wheeled his horse and looked for the last time on the settlement of Dillon, on the crowd and on the lone pine tree.

The outlaws had been hung at sunset. The Western horizon still flamed in blood-red hues streaked by inky clouds. In the shadows the crowd was a dim mass around the tree. Black, crooked shapes revolved slowly under the boughs. Dyno Red stared until darkness covered the scene. A breeze was rustling dismally through the sage. A coyote yelped mournfully from a nearby hilltop. Dyno Red's horse shivered as an unfamiliar rasping chuckle sounded from his rider. He lunged violently at the touch of the spurs.

"I'm a hung man!" chuckled Dyno Red, as he rode into the night. "Hung by proxy, by God! Oh, my pore Presbyterian brother! Ain't I a weepin' for you though? Ain't I sorrier'n hell? My pore Presbyterian brother—hack-uh-hack—fergive me for laffin'! Only joke I ever heerd of worth a damn! Hung by proxy, by God!"

V

A. P. CARVER always halted the story here to set up the drinks for his listeners. Then, with nerves properly fortified, he led them to his collection on the back wall and showed them the photograph of the twenty-six men hanging from the Dillon pine tree.

"It's faded consider'ble now," he would say, "and you can't hardly make out the features of Dyno Red's

brother. But they showed plain back in '88, when Dyno Red first come to my saloon. He'd stand and look at the picksher for a good quarter-hour sometimes. Then I'd hear that raspin' chuckle of his'n. Only times he was ever known to laff. . . . The pine tree died right after the hangin', same as trees always does," was ever A. P. Carver's last remark before he led the way back to the bar. Then the story would stream forth again.

"Now maybe you can begin to see what kind of a man this Dyno Red acshuly was, how he come to take so nacherly to organizin' the miners' unions into hell-roarin' fightin' bands. He was seized by the sperit in Butte, Montaner. And over here in the Cœur d'Alenes it blazed with holy fire.

"From all I learnt, Dyno Red, after bein' hung by proxy, turned honest miner again. The story went that he headed for Arizoner, went powder-monkeyin' agin, worked through New Mexico, Colorader and Utah, then over in the Canyon City and Baker City, Oregon, gold mines. Then he showed up at the Queen of the Hills Mine, Broadford, Idaho, time of the big strike there. He was one of the leaders in it, and as Charley Fury, the sheriff, was all for the strikin' miners, Dyno Red's old desperadoin' was never brung up agin him. Besides, two hundred men could swear they'd seen him hung. And whenever any one said, 'But wasn't it only by proxy?' it would only raise a laugh. Ever'body who knowed how it was considered it a powerful good joke on the missionary.

"Then Dyno Red hit Butte, Montaner, the great copper camp. Butte was an Irish camp, full of men who were hard and wild, but cunnin' to boot, slick with the blarney. It was the wild Irish miners of Butte who started the Western labor unions as such hell-

raisin', knock-down-and-drag-out outfits. But they had the blarney and the gift in politics, so they gener'ly kept the law on their side.

"Dyno Red's Presbyterianism didn't have much show among the Butte Irish, but it shorely flourished when he come to organize the miners in the new silver-lead diggin's of the Cœur d'Alenes in Idyho. It was mainly old-stock American miners here, and they was all like tinder under the fire of Dyno Red's revival sperit. By '92 the Cœur d'Alene miners was ready to strike for conditions and pay like the Butte miners enjoyed. Their trouble was that they didn't have the tricky knack for politics that helped the Butte Irish so much, and the mine-owners had the law in their hands. They was ready to fight. They had every shift of every mine salted with gunfighters who'd been brung in by the famous Jop Sloan.

"Only he wasn't famous then, of course. It was through his battles with Dyno Red that he come to be so well-known. Now was when they first met up. Friends, it was just like a fiery prophet of the Scriptures and the devil hisself a-tanglin' when them two met. They was enemies that nacheral.

"Jop Sloan was a much more likable cuss than Dyno Red, take him as a feller to talk and drink with. A powerful sosh'ble man. One of these nacherly free and easy, harum-scarum kind who will take the most dangerous job, if there's no work attached to it, but plenty of knockin' 'round. He was born and brung up in Joplin, Missouri, the great lead town, but he would never go minin', because, while it was dangerous enough, muckin' lead ore down in a wet, dismal stope was too much like hard labor to suit. Fin'ly, when he was a young man well past sixteen his pa and ma kicked him out and he went to Texas to be a cow hand.

There he learnt to be a first-rate shot, but ridin' the chaparral become too hard a work for him after while and he went to look for something better. Up in Col-orader he tried bein' a mine guard and he was tickled to death to find that a man could make a good livin' by standin' 'round, leanin' on a rifle and takin' a pot shot at any striker who showed hisself. He become the most loyal and paterotic gunman and stool-pigeon the Western mine-owners had; and fin'ly he clumb to the top of his trade by goin' out to the ranches and findin' other harum-scarum cow hands who didn't care what they done so long as it wasn't tiresome and wasn't work neither. He was the leader of the gunfighters salted in soft jobs through the Cœur d'Alene mines after the unions got strong.

"Jop Sloan hisself had a job as oiler in the Pluto Mill here in Wallace, and, easy as the job was, he was the cause of a pile of boxin's burnin' out. He wasn't fired, though, and that throwed some suspicion on him. Then he was suspected more in the union meetin's, on account of his happy-go-lucky nacher. His shoutin' and testifyin' didn't ring true, when his laughin' and jokin' in the mill and in the saloons was remembered.

"When the miners struck, the gunfighters come out as mine guards, but Jop Sloan still pertended to be a union man. When Dyno Red and another union leader who had also been brung up under old-time American religious influences exhorted the miners in the grim-mest and solemnest revival style, Jop Sloan shouted and testified as loud as anybody in the hall. And when it was learnt that the union battle plans had leaked out and that gov'ment troops was on the way to the Cœur d'Alenes, and Jop Sloan was accused by Dyno Red in union meetin' of bein' a stool-pigeon, why, Jop just rose up and preached a reg'lar sermon

defendin' hisself, preached it so earnestly that he made the miners hold up for him agin Dyno Red. All might have been well for him if he hadn't let the jokin' side of his nacher get the best of him that very night and right here in my saloon.

VI

"AFTER THE MEETIN' Dyno Red come in for a drink. He stood there at the middle of the bar, drinkin' by hisself, as usual. By and by he went over and studied the Dillon hangin' picksher. He turned away with his reg'lar grim laff and come back to the bar. Jop Sloan had been watchin' him, a grin spreadin' over his long, horsy face. All of a sudden, and without me seein' him, he sneaked over to that curio case—the second from the left there, with the three skulls showin' bullet holes, the strips of bloody shirts, and so on, and the little fingers which was cut from Jack Radcliffe and Diego Mangora after they was hung in the Murray Hill country. Well, Nigger Cassidy's little finger *used* to be there, too.

"Jop Sloan pried open the lid of the case with his sheath knife, picked up the black, shriveled finger that belonged to Nigger Cassidy, sneaked back to the bar with it and dropped it into Dyno Red's glass of whisky while he was starin' up in the dignified way he always did afore drinkin'.

"It might of been all right for Jop Sloan, if he hadn't snorted when Dyno Red picked up the glass and stared with the most solemn and stupefied look at the grisly black finger wagglin' in his whisky. At the sound of the snort Dyno Red jerked around. He snapped a Colt from under his left armpit and covered Jop Sloan

afore the stool-pigeon could blink. Then he spoke, deadly and grim.

" 'You stool-pigeon, you! You come up here to take the grub from the mouths of honest miners, to starve their wives and babies! You got a cannibal heart and a wolf soul, that's you, Jop Sloan! You got a stum-mick for anything! Drink that redeye now! Drink 'er down in three minutes, wolf! And eat the nigger finger, cannibal! Down with 'er, stool-pigeon! Cannibal, wolf 'er down!'

"Jop Sloan took about three seconds to stare into Dyno Red's grim and fiery gray eyes; then he turned a little pale; but he kept his nerve enough to swagger and grin as he lifted the glass and downed his medicine. And out the back door he swaggered, lookin' proud and happy-go-lucky as you please. He didn't go far till he turned sick as a dog. But he kept swaggerin' till he disappeared in the dark. It was the last seen of Jop Sloan in the Cœur d'Alenes till he drove in with a gang of Joplin scabs in '99.

"Dyno Red right away called a meetin' of all the unions. What he preached to 'em I don't know. But they certainly was filled with revival fire. 'Dynamite 'em!' was the battle cry, and they carried it out. First they tackled the Frisco Mill. An ore car was loaded with dynamite, a fuse was lit, and all was turned loose down a tramway. But the fuse was short and the car blowed up afore it reached the mill. The gunmen drove off the dynamiters. But the revival sperit wasn't to be downed. The miners dynamited the bridges to delay the gov'ment troops and they tackled the Frisco Mill agin.

"From the engine house a penstock run up the mountainside a quarter-mile. There it was fed water from

a big flume. The miners heaved boxes of dynamite down the flume and then sent a lighted fuse and caps after them. The Frisco Mill was blowed to hell and so was a lot of cow-hand gunfighters. That never win the strike, as the gov'ment troops soon settled ever'thing for the mine-owners. But Dyno Red looked as happy and satisfied as he ever had since he was hung by proxy.

"He left the Cœur d'Alenes then and didn't come back until '97 or '8. The silver-lead country had boomed to its peak by then. Spokane, across the line in Washington, grewed into the big city it is to-day from the wealth dug out of the Cœur d'Alene silver-lead miners. The unions was kept down on account of the mines always bein' well-salted with stool-pigeons and by the mine-owners goin' into politics and runnin' the state and the mine country counties. Wages was held down and workin' conditions was kept rotten. But the Western Federation of Miners had been organized under powerful American leaders who fired it with a fightin' revival spirit. Dyno Red come back as one of its most famous organizers. He come also as a fighter who was famous for his battles with Jop Sloan. They'd met up in about ever' hard-rock minin' district in the West. Each one carried a half-dozen or more slugs of lead from the other's gun, with knife and knuckle scars throwed in.

VII

"IT HAD GOT to be a mighty story. How Jop Sloan had gone down into a Bisbee, Arizoner, mine after Dyno Red, and there they run one another up and down stopes on the fifteen-hundred-foot level, dodgin' and shootin', endin' that battle with both of 'em bleed-

in' from bullet wounds, tryin' to rassle one another into the main shaft. How they throwed dynamite caps at one another in a Cripple Crick mine till the explosions caused a cave-in and they was berried for three days and nights. How they fought through five saloons in Tombstone, and ended up by layin' across one another in the last saloon, feebly gugin' at one another with the necks of busted bottles. How in Baker City, Oregon, they shot their guns empty at each other in a dance hall, then throwed the guns, each one gettin' a fractured skull; and then in the hospittle they got to fightin' with a couple bottles of chloroform and put theirselves and a whole ward to sleep, damn' near killin' a dozen. How they met on a bridge at Salmon City, Idyho, and, Jop Sloan not havin' his gun, he dived, and Dyno Red after him, and they went into a clinch under water, and neither one'd give up, and when they was drug out, near drowned, it took six men to pry 'em apart so's the water could be pumped out of their lungs. That was when Jop Sloan said he guessed he was licked and would go back to Joplin to live out the rest of his days in peace.

"Dyno Red was packin' more scars than I ever see on a mortal man, but his sperit was fierier than ever. In all the unions along the Fork he exhorted the miners with such power that he reaped shoutin' converts like he was holdin' camp-meetin's. And afore long he and the other old-stock American union leaders had the miners primed for action. What come was even wilder than the battle of '92.

"Under Dyno Red a thousand miners stole a box car loaded with dynamite, kidnaped a train crew, and forced them to haul the whole works down the canyon to Wardner, where the Bunker Hill & Sullivan, the biggest mine and mill of the Cœur d'Alenes, was

located. They blowed it to hell, just as Dyno Red and the other revivalist union leader had done to the Frisco Mill seven years afore.

"Then troops and guards was poured into the Cœur d'Alenes, just as it happened afore. Bullpens was built, and the American miners was held there for a year and a half under the bayonets of the state militia. Then what we've come to call 'the Joplin scabs' was brung in to work the mines.

"You can figger who it was that acted as man-catcher and captain of the scabs for the mine-owners. Nobody but Jop Sloan, scarred up even worse'n Dyno Red, but as full of hell as ever. You can figger agin his duties didn't hold him long when he learnt that Dyno Red was in one of the bullpens.

"No, sir. About midnight of the day he drove in with his scabs the town was roused by shots and yells from the bullpens. The saloon crowds rushed to see. The bullpen where Dyno Red had been held was torn to pieces. The bunkhouse was smashed to flinders and about twenty men was laid out under the wreck. When the excitement was calmed down it was learnt that Jop Sloan had broke through the guards and dynamited the flimsy shack. Somehow Dyno Red's bunk was shot square through the roof, with him on it and he come down astraddle of Jop Sloan's neck. They went to the dirt together, rolled over to the wrecked bunkhouse, and when they come up each one had a two-by-four in his hand. They stood up and whaled away for dear life, splinterin' the two-by-fours over each other's heads, neither one goin' down, till the militia guards come runnin' and shootin'. Then both took out, disappeared in the dark.

"The rest is all hearsay. I've give you all the facts I know. Next I heard of 'em was of a tremenjous battle

two men had with sheep shears over in a Montaner sheep camp, in which neither one was licked. I've heerd of at least forty more in the last ten years. All over the West, from Mexico to Nome they go, travelin' under false names and in disguises, always travelin' to meet up and fight it out fin'ly to a finish, but they never do. They just fight theirselves unconscious, then they're sep'rated and when they come to and get well they have to go travelin' to find one another agin. You've heerd of their fights, though prob'ly you never knowed who it was a-fightin'. That famous fist-fight over'n the Palouse which lasted thirteen hours and ended with 'em havin' to judge the winner by who was in the hospittle the shortest time—wasn't it a horse-faced feller who was only in six months and was called the winner? Friends, that was Jop Sloan. Did you hear of the fightin' Wobbly in the Overall Brigade where they hoboed to the I.W.W. convention in Chicago to round it up for the West—didn't you hear of him sluggin' it out with a railroad detective, each one fightin' with a railroad spike slung from a rope? That Wobbly was Dyno Red the Miner and the detective was Jop Sloan. Have you heerd of the pick-handle battle on the top of Chilkoot Pass? Jop Sloan and Dyno Red the Miner. Have you heerd of two shift bosses in a Paral, Mexico, silver mine fightin' with each one grip-pin' a stick of dynamite in each fist? Jop Sloan and Dyno Red the Miner agin. Did you hear of the Wobbly strike-leader and the deppity sheriff over in a Coast loggin' camp battlin' on a log boom, tryin' to spear each other with pike-poles, and them both fallin' to once with their bellies ripped open? You know who they was—Dyno Red the Miner and Jop Sloan!

"On and on they go, and me, who knows the whole terrible story better'n anybody, almost shiver my hide

off when I think about it. I tell you, it ain't hardly mortal, this eternal battle between Dyno Red and Jop Sloan, which it seems certain neither one will never win. I tell you there's more in it than mortal eye can ever see. It's the fight between Presbyterianism and the old hell, that's what it is. I hear of 'em fightin' on, in their ter'ble battles without victory from Mexico to Nome, makin' great stories all over the West, and I get the feelin' they'll go on fightin' that way till they die, and go to hell. And there the fight between Dyno Red the Miner and Jop Sloan'll go on as long as hell burns. There's a powerful mystery about it all. . . . Well, friends, I'll set 'em up again. . . ."

And as the miners drank in the dim light of the old saloon and looked upon the grim, decaying souvenirs of the old West that seemed to stir with shadowy life on the dark wall, on the nooses that seemed to still hold some of the life they had smothered, on the faded photograph of the Dillon hanging in which the crooked forms seemed to sway and turn, they felt the dreadful impulse to believe in A. P. Carver's powerful mystery. They, too, often shivered in their hides. It was not easy to laugh at the solemnly told tale in that scene, with deadly relics of the past coming to life around, with the wind outside howling down the South Fork. It was better, then, to drink until life was friendly again in an alcoholic glow. . . .

VIII

A. P. CARVER's trade declined as civilization crept up the South Fork of the Cœur d'Alene River. The mining camps were no more; in their stead were miniatures of the West's industrial cities. The young miners cared nothing for either the West's history or its lore; they

labored in the mining towns only to earn stakes that would purchase rounds of pleasure in Butte, Seattle, and Spokane. They kept in touch with city life through newspapers; they talked as city men over their mixed drinks on the new shining bars. Only a few old-timers patronized the decaying saloon on the side street, and hearkened, over straight redeye, to A. P. Carver's tales.

His credit declined until a foreclosure was threatened. He decided on a brave attempt to hold his own with the forces of the new era. Another old saloon went out of business. Ten barrels of pure double-stamp whisky were up for sale. A. P. Carver bid them in at a bargain. His note was taken. His plan was to sell the whisky undiluted. His bar liquor should lose the stigma of "rotgut" and "redeye." His trade should increase. To advertise his purpose, he put the barrels on display in the barroom, five standing at the rear end, and five in front. They made a handsome show. The staves and hoops inclosed more than ardent spirits of double-stamp purity; they encompassed the future of A. P. Carver himself.

The first night of their display no new customers appeared. But the old ones promised to advertise the new quality of the Carver's bar liquor. So his bulging eyes gleamed with hope as he stood at the bar at mid-night, alone. There had not been a customer for fifteen minutes. A. P. Carver leaned on the bar, and dreamed. He saw himself as a successful man of business at last; now he was awake and on the go; nothing should stop him until he owned a glittering saloon that should be called the Palace, and a palace it should be! Yes, sir . . . well, for . . . what the hell!

The dream of the Palace whirled away behind the blue steel barrel of an enormous Colt revolver. A. P.

Carver stared into a black hole that appeared to him the size of a well. Then he saw heavy shoulders—a long, horsy face slashed with scars, savage black eyes under a mop of grizzled curls that seemed to stand straight up—"Jop Sloan, by God!" A. P. Carver gasped, under his quivering mustache. And it was Jop Sloan. He was hatless, his eyes were wild, his mouth was open, he panted—

"Anybody asks—anybody run—in here—you tell 'em no—or I shootchuh—b'Jeezus!"

He jammed the gun against A. P. Carver's chest, then he swung back and appeared to dive from where he stood to the row of whisky barrels in the rear of the room. He disappeared. A. P. Carver stared like a statue of astonishment, until the doors crashed open again—and he looked into the blaze of the deep-set gray eyes of Dyno Red the Miner!

A big Colt revolver was sticking out from each hand as stiffly as though riveted there. The guns swept the room with the swing of Dyno Red's wiry body. Above them his gray eyes stared, his looks scorching every inch of the room. Suddenly his gaze began to follow a straight line. It was along some fresh crumbs of mud that led to the back row of whisky barrels. Dyno Red's eyes changed to a cold glitter. His lean jaws were like ridges of iron. He snaked rapidly backward to the row of barrels in the front of the barroom. His knees bent, then he sprang over the barrels. As he did the room resounded with the roaring crack of a revolver and his shoulder smoked.

Then—crack! crack! crack!—three shots from one of his guns roared—then—crack! crack! crack!—from the back rows of barrels—and all of the dim old barroom in front of A. P. Carver seemed to smoke, blaze and whirl—and still he stood and gaped like he was

petrified. He smelled powder, he saw poisonous blue smoke fogging up from both rows of barrels, but he could not realize what was actually going on. Instead, he was struck by the notion that his precious barrels were somehow alive, that they were fighting, that blood was running from their torn sides. "Why!" he muttered, in a hoarse whisper, "the barrels is bleedin', the pore damn' barrels, they're bleedin'!" The next thing he knew a bullet roared by his ear and struck the mirror behind him. He dropped to the floor, half-stunned, believing that the shattering smash of the mirror had been his skull cracking. . . . What happened is afterwards best described in the story he told at the inquest.

"When I come out of the daze the Colts was still spittin' lead and roarin' hell. How long the two ter'ble enemies had been firin' I don't know. But right after I come back to myself the fight ended. There come a dead quiet. Then for what seemed like hours I never dared to move—not that I'm skeery, as a gener'l rule, but I'm knowin' better'n anybody the awful battles them two had fought through in the past twenty-five years, and the innercent bystanders they'd killed. But at last I nerved myself to get to my knees and peek over the bar.

"Dyno Red had crawled out from behind his row of barrels. He was half-doubled over, his knees sagged as he drug hisself to his feet, and he squeezed his middle with both hands as he wove his way to the barrels in the back of the barroom. For a minute he swayed there and groaned out the most ter'ble curses I've ever heerd in all my borned days, damnin' Jop Sloan as a capitalist's wolf and cannibal whose black heart should 'a' been shot out long ago.

"'But now I've done it, Jop Sloan!' Dyno Red

bawled, in a powerful voice. 'It took me twenty-seven of the hardest fights that ever was between Mexico and Nome, but fin'ly I got you Jop Sloan!'

"Then he cussed some more in his solemn revival style until it stopped in an awful groan. Then Dyno Red said, in a hoarse, choked voice:

" 'God, I'm dyin'! Got me—got me—anyway—Jop Sloan—fink bastard—we'll fight 'er out—in hell then—fight 'er out long as hell burns—Jop Sloan!'

"He sagged heavier, like he was goin' to sink in a heap, then he straightened some and I heerd his teeth grind. He clawed along the wall to the hangin' picksher. Saggin' and staggerin', Dyno Red the Miner stared at the picksher like he was drunk. Words come low.

"My brother! B'loved Presbyterian brother! Died for me, didn't you, brother? Died for me just as you and—folks always preached Je—Jerus'lem Slim died for all sinners. Won't meet you—in hell—brother. You died for your pore—sinful brother—didn't want to—huh? One and only Presb'terian preacher—ever follered example Jerus'lem Slim! Halleluiah—b'lov'd brother! Hung by proxy—by God! Only joke—ever made me laff!' He laffed then, with his raspin' chuckle, then his words come so low I could hardly hear. 'You're eatin' pie in the sky—I'm goin' to hell—fight long as hell burns with Jop Sloan—fink bastard—croakin' my way to hell—'lov'd brother—joke on you—goin' uh hell—a-laffin'—a-laffin'—a-laffin'—'

"And that was how he died, in one long, horr'ble, grim, groanin' laff, while he slowly piled hissself down in a heap on the floor. He twitched a few times, and that was the end of Dyno Red the Miner. Of him and Jop Sloan. Unless they go on fightin' long as hell burns.

I, for one, have a feelin' they will, knowin' their story as I do. . . .

"All right, I'll stick to my story. After while the night marshal come in, pickin' his teeth, as he'd just finished supper, and he looked the men over.

"'Nothin' for me,' he said, 'except to call the coroner.'

"Then he noticed the whisky barrels, and so did I. Well, sir, I turned sick and cold all over when I saw they wasn't a barrel that didn't have its staves stove in by forty-four bullets. There was all my fine double-stamp licker ruint, and it not paid for yet, and who'd wonder I turned sick and cold when—"

"That's hardly any concern of mine," snapped the coroner. "That's all for you, Mr. Carver. Thanks. . . ."

Pete Repp, timberman, was one young miner who remembered the story of Jop Sloan and Dyno Red as it had been Homerically told over the Carver's bar. He recalled it and the misfortunes of the bard to friends in another saloon.

"Made the battle sound big as ever at the inquest, too," he said. "Made it sound tremenjus. I think he'd told it all so much he believed it hisself. Pore old cuss. He won't stand it long in the mine. . . . Yeah, I guess I'll ramble over to Spokane when I make my stake. . . ."

THE HARDSHELL ELDER

I

THE juice of the barley had transformed the irrigator from the Engles ranch. The hay hands looked at him, and listened, and doubted their ears and eyes. Out at the ranch his only look had been a scowl, his only speech a snarl. A regular old crank. But Pearl Peebles was beery now. His hand rested on the bar of the Overland Saloon, and the foam of his twelfth glass of beer bloomed above his hand. Loving-kindness shone in his pale-blue eyes. The lines of his weather-beaten face were figures of tranquillity. The third glass of beer had drowned his snarl; he spoke now with the tongue of one who had lived life well and loved it all.

"You fellers is lookin' at a man who's run water from ever' big ditch of this Western country. Yes, sir, I know 'em all, from the Steamboat Canal in Nebrasky to the Gallatin Valley of Montaner and from there to the Imperial in Southern Cal. I've been a water-master at Big Cottonwood Crick, Utah, I've irrigated Yakima spuds, Wenatchee apples, Payette prunes, and Hood River strawberries; I've furrer-irrigated cotton in the Imperial Valley, sub-irrigated Arizomer mush-melons, flooded Pecos Valley alfalfa, been a water-master agin on the Buffalo Canal in Colorader, and the same on the old Ridenbaugh at Nampa, here in Idyho.

"Now, young fellers, here I am, back in the best

old irrigation country of the West, the one I know best of all, the good old Boise Valley of Idyho. Here I am, back to live out the rest of my days in the finest alfalfa and d'versyfyed ranch country I know of. Plumb settled down with the Dines fambly on the old Engles ranch. The Dineses are Hardshells, and I aim to stay with 'em till I die. It counts a lot to a ranch hand, the religion of the ranchers he works fer. It makes a pile of differ'nce. I know from experience."

Pearl Peebles downed his beer in two gulps and ordered another round for himself and the three young hay hands.

"You take the Mormons, now, down here in Bannock County," he went on, as the thirteenth glass foamed and glowed in his hand. "You take them. I run water fer them as fur back as the seventies, and they treated me fine. Both the Utah and Idyho Mormons is real people and I been tempted time and agin to take three or four wives for myself and settle down among them as a sugar-beet rancher. What has always galled me, though, is tithin'. I'm a free and liberal man, and it'd gall me to be tithed as though I couldn't be trusted to be free and liberal. Now, take the Presbyterians. Once I was tempted to settle down in a Pecos Valley Presbyterian settlement and raise alfalfa and run sheep. But infant damnation stuck in my craw. So I couldn't stand the Presbyterians, though they were fine, fine as they make 'em, outside of infant damnation. Take the Methodists. You don't find 'em any finer'n the Methodists. I was tempted many a time in the early days to join the Yuma, Arizoner, Methodist settlement. But I absolutely bucked at the doctrine of sanctification. Take the Advents. I knowed a settlement of Seven Days at Yakima, Washington, and a settlement of Christian Advents in the Gallatin

Valley; all fine people, mighty fine; but I could never swaller the doctrine that the sperit is the breath. Take the Campbellites. Best people in the world, in their way, as I found when I irrigated in a Hood River Campbellite settlement. But they set too much store by immersion. I'll be bound if I can believe the *style* of baptism is everything. Return to primitive Christianity is good doctrine, but the Hardshells has it better. Besides, the Campbellites is wrong about the time of the Pentecost. Take the Missionary Baptists. I'd never ask to be among finer people than the Missionary Baptists over in the Twin Falls, Idyho, potater country. But they are too narrer on missionaryin' to the heathen. If I can only get my soul saved by bein' stirred about the cannibal heathen, why, my soul's lost to eternal fire, that's all, for I can't be showed enough Scripture to rouse me over 'em.

"But all fine people," Pearl Peebles declared. He drank again, and ordered the fourteenth drink with a motion of his gnarled hand. "All the religious ranchers I've ever knowed was fine, exceptin' the Dunkards and the idolatrous Romans. The Dunkards is stricter'n Elijah, beyond all sense and Scripture, and of course the Romans is simply pagan worshipers of graven images.

"When you come right down to it, judgin' from all my experience, there ain't no sect like the good old predestinarian Hardshell. They don't missionary, they don't Sunday-school, they don't go faunchin' after dancin' and cards, they don't hold with the convertin' of children, or the covvertin' of anybody, fer that matter. If you've experienced religion, you can accept their doctrines, and worship with 'em. Maybe some Hardshells get too strong on the doctrines of feet-

washin' and election, but gener'ly their religion never sticks in my craw a particle. They're the finest of fine people.

"There was old Elder John Eccles Morgan. I knowed him in the pioneer days, and I knowed him in the early nineties, time of all the fights about water rights. He would come into the bar of the old Overland House, order his bourbon, and drink it like a Southern Chrischun gen'leman. Pore old Elder Morgan. Yes, sir, he's right porely now. When I see him, feeble as he is, and think of that night in the Overland—that was the time he was in the middle of his fight over water rights with the Engleses—and how he outmanned the gambler and killer, Jim Brandon—well, we're jest gettin' old, me and the elder. Times change, us old-timers fade out. Can't be helped. . . . Set 'em up agin, bartender. . . ."

II

ELDER JOHN ECCLES MORGAN stood before the bar of the Overland House. His right hand closed about a bottle of Kentucky bourbon, in the attitude of a blessing bestowed. His left hand raised a glass a few inches above the bar. It was a gesture of solemnity and grace. The bottle rose with slow dignity, bowed stiffly, and sublime liquor slowly trickled into the glass. A drink poured, Elder Morgan carefully returned the bottle to the bar. He slowly lifted the glass. Under the bar light the bourbon revealed its benignant age in the mellowness of its glow, in the silken smoothness of its round smile. It vanished. The elder's black beard moved on his chest as he relished the hot flavors that swam about his tongue. He swallowed, closed his eyes,

smiled kindly through his beard, circled the empty glass under his nose, set it beside the bottle, opened his eyes drowsily, observed himself in the bar mirror, and parted his moustache and smoothed his beard.

Elder Morgan stood at his ease before the bar, a figure of austere distinction in the vivid life that glared and clamored throughout the saloon. The faro, poker and solo tables were crowded with men in broadcloth and diamonds and men in the rough garb of the cow camp, the mine and the woods. Brilliant reflectors cast a white glow over the colors of cards and chips, the green of tables, the silks, powder and paint of the dance girls. Men and girls, arm in arm, strolled to and from the bar. White-jacketed waiters glided through the crowd, glasses sparkling and liquor glowing on their trays. A piano rattled, a fiddle squealed, dancers shuffled over the floor. The elder poured another drink of venerable bourbon.

Rosalie of Denver, Jim Brandon's newest girl, was acting as lookout for the faro king's table. She was bored with the game, as she was bored with life; her gaze kept roving from the table. At last she saw the elder, at the upper end of the bar. A man obviously remote from the life she knew. Rosalie's black eyes sparkled with interest.

She saw a tall, powerful figure, the back straight and the shoulders wide in an old but decent-looking Prince Albert coat. A wavy black beard with thin streaks of silver in it flowed over a deep chest. Between the beard and a towering Columbia style black Stetson with its crown crushed in the center, there was a thin Roman nose flanked by dark eyes that shone kindly now. Long, black eyebrows arched high on his forehead. They were a mark of dignity and pride.

The elder turned slowly from the bar and strode through the crowd for the faro table. Rosalie felt the beating of her heart and a flush on her face. She averted her gaze to the faro game. She heard the elder's voice, solemnly cadenced, addressing one of the players. Apparently he had not noticed her.

"I'm startin' for the ranch now, Peebles. Come on along."

"I'm way loser, elder," said the irrigator, in a thick voice. "Hate to quit when I'm way loser."

"You come along, now," said the elder, firmly.

Peebles reluctantly shoved over his small stack of chips. As Brandon counted them, the elder's gaze rested on a player at the far corner of the table. His brows drew together in a frown, and his eyes glittered like an Indian's. Frank Engles felt the look that burned on him, and the red crept over his neck, but he kept his thick shoulders hunched and his big chin down, his little gray eyes gleaming sidewise from under sandy lashes.

Diamonds flashed as Brandon's long white fingers placed two dollars and seventy-five cents in silver before the elder's irrigator. Peebles clutched it with an angry gesture and kicked the chair over as he got to his feet. The elder strode for the door. Peebles' beery eyes saw Rosalie of Denver. She was gazing after the tall departing figure. Her lips were parted. A yearning tenderness illumined her face. Rosalie was inviting.

"By God," muttered Pearl Peebles, "all I lost to Jim Brandon, I'm goin' have a kiss off his woman anyways! . . ."

Peebles staggered after the elder, with unwomanly epithets ringing in his ears and three fingernail scratches on his right cheek. And Jim Brandon was up from the game, calling for another dealer to take his chair.

III

OUT in the darkness of the summer night Elder Morgan swung off the sidewalk in front of the hitching rack where his wagon team was tied. His boots sank to the ankles in the dust of the street. The near horse nickered. The off one snorted and pranced. Both were keen to start for home, lively from three hours in the livery stable and a hearty feed of ground oats. The elder lifted a tarpaulin and squinted through the darkness at his boxes of supplies. Satisfied that they had not been molested, he began to untie the halter rope of the near horse. He looked back toward the Overland. Peebles certainly was coming. Yes, sir, there was the man, staggering. Too bad. He had no sense whatever of the benevolence of ardent spirits. He knew nothing of placating their hot tempers with fine appreciation. Peebles should drink nothing but beer. Dishwater for dullards, reflected the Kentuckian. The knot was stubborn. He bent over it. As he did the rope tightened, snapped sharply against his face, and he was flung violently against the post. The horses reared; their snorts sounded against the echo of a revolver shot. The elder stared toward the lights of the Overland.

A black figure loomed in the shadows on the sidewalk. For an instant it was as motionless as a tall tree stump. Then it sprang forward, bent over a dim, huddled shape, straightened, a foot swung back, ahead, and the huddled shape rolled, and thudded into the dust below the sidewalk.

"Lay there and rot, damn yer eyes!" The words were low but sounded like sharp hammer blows. "You'll be a lesson!"

Jim Brandon returned his Colt to its shoulder holster and walked on toward the Overland.

Elder Morgan circled the wagons and teams at the hitching rack in half a dozen long strides. Pearl Peebles was sprawled face-down, half-submerged in the dust. The elder rolled him over and raised his head and wiped the dust from his face. The man was not dead. He spoke in feeble moans.

"I was only foolin'. Hadn't oughter shot me—jest fer—that."

"What'd you do, Peebles?"

"Jest stole a kiss from his woman. Hadn't oughter—oh, I'm a hurtin'! Oh! Oh!"

Elder Morgan straightened up, with Peebles moaning in his arms. He tramped through the dust of the street until he reached the steps that led up to the wide shining doors of the Overland House. He tramped up the steps, kicked open the doors, paused for a second, saw that Jim Brandon was already back at the faro table, and strode directly for him, ignoring the sudden hush, the cessation of all movement, in the barroom. He jammed between the two players facing the dealer, laid the wounded, moaning man on the faro table, and his voice roared up from his chest and out of his black beard at the killer and faro king.

"You, Jim Brandon! You, in yore diamonds, broadcloth, b'iled shirt and beaver hat, you think that makes you a gentleman! You call yoreself a gentleman, Jim Brandon! And here you shot this pore soul down, kicked him off the sidewalk into the dirt, and swore he could lay there and rot! That's how much you care for a human soul, Jim Brandon! He's a homeless, friendless man, you think, and maybe he is, but you've done the last of that kind of killin's, Jim Brandon! You're goin' to get a doctor for this pore soul, you'll find if he has a fambly, and if he passes to that bourne from which no traveler returns, you'll give his widow

and orphans gold, Jim Brandon! I make my vow here, before all assembled, that it's goin' to be woe unto you if you ever shoot another pore cretur made in God's image and kick him in the dirt like he was a plain hawg, Jim Brandon! And woe be unto you again if I ever hear you profane the title of gentleman by applyin' it to the likes of yoreself, Jim Brandon!"

The space behind the elder was emptied before the first fiery sentence of his speech was done. When he had finished the trumpet blast of his voice continued to ring in the ears of the awed crowd. Jim Brandon returned the elder's stare, his gray eyes glittering as coldly as his diamonds, his face turning as white as his shirt front. His right hand moved imperceptibly across the table, rose gently toward his left shoulder, then his face flushed, his eyes gave way, and his hand fell. His yellow curled mustache moved.

"Have it yore way, elder." He motioned to a couple of waiters. "Pack this man to a room and send for Doc Shanklin." He spoke again to the elder, without raising his eyes. "I'll do what you want, but I'm still claimin' I shot in self-defense."

"I'm not interested in yore claims, sir," said the elder. "Save them for yore excuses to Frank Engles and yore other followers." The fire of the exhorter had left his speech; he spoke with slow dignity. "I'm maintainin' an interest in yore crimes, though, from now on, Jim Brandon. And I regard it as a crime for the likes of you to pretend to the title of gentleman."

He swung off, to follow the two men carrying Pearl Peebles out of the barroom. As he did he met the intense stare of Rosalie of Denver. He mistook her look for one of resentment and indignation.

"If this scene has offended you, I apologize." Elder Morgan removed his hat and his coal-black hair waved

at her in a bow. "I intended no disrespect toward you, madam."

Rosalie saw him clearly for a long time after he was gone. She saw him drinking alone, with austere ceremony, at the bar. She saw his great black eyes magnificently ablaze above the wounded ranch hand on the faro table. She saw him as he bowed before her, reservedly apologetic, severely deferential. And he would never speak to her again. The thought came to her unreasonably, and ridiculously it hurt. What a fool she was to think of him! She did not yet know that he was a preacher. She only knew that he was a good man, that he was an old one, probably forty-five, and she was young Rosalie of Denver, Jim Brandon's newest girl. The gambler's voice snarled up at her.

"Keep yore eyes on this God-damn' game, will you?"

Rosalie amiably obeyed. She was a good lookout until midnight. Then Brandon took her to supper. Frank Engles was a heavy loser. Rosalie overheard Brandon's whisper:

"You shoot that old hell-hound in any of these water battles of your'n' and I'll see you through. You won't need to worry about what you owe me, neither."

Rosalie's gaze followed Engles as he hunched along, his head down, his hands jammed into his pockets, making for the bar. She had heard without interest a great deal of talk here in the Overland about fights over water rights. She thought about them as she nibbled chicken meat and sipped wine over a small white-clothed table. Brandon was talking.

"Don't think I'm yellow just because I backed down before that old hellion. . . . Old-timer . . . fought Injuns . . . chief of the Vigilantes once . . . stir up all the old-timers . . . got to be careful. . . . Just don't you get it in your head I was afraid to shoot.

He's the Hardshell preacher, too, out to Sunnyside. If I was to plug a preacher . . ."

Brandon's talk had been only an irritation to her ears until now. Rosalie exclaimed— "A preacher!"

"Certainly. A preacher . . . Well, what's the matter."

"Oh, go to hell!"

IV

THE DARKNESS of midnight was over the elder's eyes. He slept with his face turned toward the wide-open window, and his great brown hand was sprawled on the bedside. The air of the August night drowsed in sluggishly from the fields. It was heavy with the smell of wet alfalfa land under irrigation.

The quiet of this midnight darkness was so profound that the faint sound of a far rifle shot quivered over it like the vibrations of a bell-stroke. The elder stirred sharply in his deep sleep. The fingers of the hand sprawled over the bedside clenched. Other shots sounded in rapid succession from far away. For a minute perhaps the quiet was broken, then it was black stillness again in the room. While sound struck over him the elder dreamed.

He dreamed that he was Job. He sat in affliction before his house and raised his voice against the will of God. Those who heard him were not Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, but the people of his church; he cried out to his congregation; he unbosomed himself to his brethren and poured out his heart in lamentations. He had lost his sons, and his strength and pride had followed them; suddenly he was an afflicted man, desolated in old age. So he cried out to his congregation, until one arose and cried in a voice of thunder:

"He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand; he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure!"

Then the whole congregation rose with a great shout, "It shall not endure!" and stoned him, drove him forth. . . . Suddenly he was alone, on a sagebrush plain, and Indians circled him on galloping ponies. The circle tightened, drew closer, so that he could see the face of the chief. Under the head-dress of eagle feathers and above stripes of war paint gleamed the eyes of Jim Brandon. He rode closer, flourishing a war club. The elder felt the strength and pride of his youth again. He dodged under the blow and leaped for a grip on the gambler's body . . . he felt his hand close around the butt of a revolver . . . and then he awoke in the profoundly quiet dark. . . .

"By the A'mighty!" said the elder aloud. "That was real, for a dream!"

He lay down again, determined to sleep. But his eyes would stay open, he would hold his breath and listen, his hands slowly clenching, while evil shapes took form in the deep dark before his eyes. At last he grew angry with himself. He spoke in a harsh whisper.

"Now, you looky here, Elder John Eccles Morgan, you behave yoreself and go to sleep. You're simply makin' a fool out of yoreself. Everything is all right. Harley and Seth are out there on the South Forty runnin' a head of water through the alfalfy, and they'll be in in another hour, safe and sound. You know they're not goin' to have no more fightin' with Frank Engles. All the trouble with you, John Eccles Morgan, is that yore supper didn't agree with you, and it made you have a nightmare. You go to sleep now, and don't make an old fool out of yoreself."

But the reproof did no good. His mind persisted in listening and in conjuring threatening shapes from the

dark. And words returned, ringing in a note of warning through his ears:

"He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand; he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure . . . it shall not endure. . . ."

At last, still grumbling at himself, Elder Morgan got out of bed, found a match, struck it and held it over the face of his huge silver watch. When he saw that the time was past midnight he felt a damp chill on his forehead. No sound of Harley and Seth coming in yet; never dreamed it was so late; better go take a look, even if it was behaving like a fitty old woman. . . .

His sons' room was empty of life. The lamp shook in his hand as he saw their rubber hip boots in a heap against the wall. The hooks where their revolver belts usually hung were empty. The elder stared at them dully for a moment, and age was on his face. But it was only for a moment. He turned so savagely that the lamp chimney jumped from the burner clasp. He seized it before it crashed, jammed it back into place, and left the lamp on the sitting room table. In another minute he was in his hickory shirt, his jeans and his cowhide boots. He lit a lantern and left the house. He covered the hundred yards to the main ditch in long, rapid strides. The lantern glow showed only the black mud of the ditch bottom; the flow, the elder judged, had been stopped for more than an hour. A black storm of wrath gathered in his heart. The water war had broken out again. Frank Engles and his neighbors were denying the Morgans their rightful share from the low August flow of the river. And Harley and Seth had ridden off to battle without him. Had left him asleep, as though he were an old woman. Well—they'd see, the young hellions—if he could catch them

in time. He strode for the barn, his feet light as the fire of battle streamed in his blood. Many another night in the past forty years he had armed himself, saddled a horse and ridden forth for battle, and always to lead. As a warrior he had pioneered in the Missouri wilderness. So he had met the perils and hardships of the ox-team journey over the dreadful plains. So, after settling in this valley, he had led expeditions against Indian raiders. So he had organized the Vigilantes against the outlaws who followed the gold-seekers to the Boise Basin and the Sawtooth Mountains. So he had preached from the Books of Moses to his pioneer congregation. And as a warrior he had borne the loss of his two older sons . . . and of Ruth, his wife. . . .

Now, with the country made ready for civilization, he had to war with newcomers for water for his land. He burned for the fray. His wrath flamed against his sons for leaving him behind. In his mind he lashed them with violent terms remembered from fiery passages of Scripture. . . . He left his horse by the door and entered the house for his black coat, tall hat and blue-steel pistol. He was imposingly arrayed as he leaned over to extinguish the lamp, appearing as he had that night when he laid the law down to Jim Brandon in the Overland House. He had shaken off age like an old garment. He was the young pioneer fighter again, going forth to a Western War. Memory caught him suddenly, held him motionless above the lamp. A frail hand touched his arm ever so lightly; he heard Ruth's voice again. . . .

"It is not your place, as a minister of God. He asks humility and meekness from His servants. You're just yieldin' to your worldly pride, John. Why don't you cast it down?"

So her calm voice and serene eyes reproached him again. She had never complained on her own account. Her concern was always for his own soul, for his ministry. She herself had always submitted humbly to every trial. But he had never submitted, not even for her sake, though he formally accepted her faith that they were of the elect of God, that this world was for them a dark and thorny desert, and that their only peace would come when they found eternal rest in Abraham's bosom. But his spirit would not allow him to deny the worth of his strength among men. It made him keep his feet before the Almighty.

"He is a jealous God," he heard Ruth say again. "Some day His hand will smite."

He remembered the vision in the dream; and the shout of the congregation:

"It shall not endure!"

Then he feared for his sons. If they were taken from him, leaving him alone, would he submit at last, drive violence from his heart, be humble and meek under the great burden of such a tribulation? . . . The elder breathed hard, and he spread his hands on the table, for support. . . . Revenge—but vengeance is mine, saith . . . The elder was aroused by the nicker of his horse; then he heard hoofs thudding down the road. He straightened and his beard lifted on his chest as he sighed vastly with relief.

There was one of the boys coming now. Surely everything was all right. He'd been a fool to think Frank Engles would dare to fight the Morgans, after the warning he'd had. Probably the boys were right: he was getting old—needed to be taken care of—was getting so nervous and fitty he couldn't sleep any more. Anyhow, the Almighty be praised. . . .

But it was neither Harley nor Seth. It was Pearl

Peebles who answered the elder's hail. His pale face and staring eyes revealed the stress of painful emotion as he entered the house. He broke his news in a fever of words.

"It was that woman of Jim Brandon's told me, elder. Why, I don't know, onless—but never mind. She come up to my room a hour ago powerful excited and said Jim and a couple others'd gone out with Frank Engles to Frank's ranch; and they was aimin' to turn all the water from the main ditch down Frank's headgate, and then wait for you and Harley and Seth to show up for battle, as you'd warned Frank you would if yore water was stole agin. Then they was to shoot, and shoot to kill, and Brandon and his men was to sneak back to town, leavin' it so's it would seem that Frank had only been defendin' his property and water rights.

"Weak as I was, I got out, hired a hoss and hit out over the bench road right now. I cut over to the ditch below the Engles headgate, but I didn't meet nobody. I rode on to warn you; then I heerd shots; and I figgered I'd best rouse out some of yore neighbors; then I saw yore light a-burnin'—"

"You heard shootin', you say!"

The elder's voice roared out of his beard; the cry for war and vengeance was free of its bonds. Fire streamed in his veins again and red specks sparkled before his eyes. He listened no more and he said no more. He strode from the house. . . .

Frank Engles stood behind his kitchen stove, his back to the wall, a rifle slung in the bend of his left arm. His small eyes glittered feverishly under their thick, rusty lashes, as he talked continuously, in a hoarse, excited growl. Four lanterns were burning on

the oilcloth-covered table. Four neighboring ranchers sat on the other side of the stove, saying nothing. They watched the door, and listened intently. Every so often their looks would be drawn to the two long forms completely covered with blankets which lay against the wall, in the shadows. Then they would glance at Frank Engles, then at each other, and then at the door again.

Frank Engles said:

"If it wasn't self-defense, you think I'd be waitin' here for the sheriff? Think I'd let you brung 'em into my house? I tell you, by God, I had to kill or be killed. I warned 'em. I got my irrigator for witness. I warned 'em to git off my property. They called me a thief. I told 'em to git off; if I was a thief they could go to law. One of 'em shot first. My irrigator will testify. It was self-defense. I shot back. Maybe I hit one of 'em. I dunno. Anyway, they come for me, and shot more. I rode to my house here. They come after me. They was comin' to kill me. I took my rifle. What else could I do? What the hell else? I ask you all. What could anybody do? They was comin' to get me. They was comin' to kill. I laid low and I shot with my rifle to kill. I killed 'em. It was self-defense, my life or their'n. I sent a man to notify the sheriff. I let you neighbors bring the bodies in decent to my house. It was self-defense. I'll go free, I tell you. I can't help it. They can't hang a man for self-defense. I'll be free as you are in a week. I didn't want to kill over water rights. It was self—"

His voice, which had run on faster and faster, rising to a frenzied pitch, stopped short, then choked into a "God damn!" that was a gasp.

For an instant the ranchers saw Elder Morgan in the doorway. Then the room roared, and was clouded was stinking smoke. Silence then, and light. Frank

Engles was crumpled in his corner. Elder Morgan clasped a wounded shoulder, as he stalked steadily to the shrouded bodies of his sons. He turned back the blanket. . . .

At the trial one of the ranchers testified that he particularly remembered the deep woe in the elder's voice as he fell to his knees.

"No, sir; he never prayed. He just said over and over, solemn and slow, and so infernal sad:

" 'It shall not stand—it shall not endure.' "

V

BUT IT WAS the testimony of Rosalie of Denver that made Elder John Eccles Morgan a blameless figure in the eyes of the jury. She revealed a conspiracy that was not only against him but had set deadly snares for other ranchers of the valley. Jim Brandon's ambitions had soared above the faro table. He had taken up mortgages on various ranches, including Elder Morgan's, and then planned to involve them in fights for water rights which would deprive them of the precious August flow. With crops ruined, he could foreclose. He had boasted to Rosalie that he was the future land king of the valley. Against the elder, of course, he had wanted to revenge himself. Rosalie of Denver told the story of the shooting of Pearl Peebles. . . .

The elder listened to her with the stern gravity which he never lost for one moment during the trial. He was erect, rigid and motionless in his chair. Both of his feet rested solidly on the floor. His great hands, worn and browned by toil and weather, were crossed over his lap. His beard was carefully brushed over his buttoned black coat. He never frowned, but from under

the proud arches of his eyebrows his black eyes gazed in stern defiance, with a gravity so impressive that the jury found it dreadful to regard, and with a certain reflection of light that gave him a look of mystery, as though visions were passing before him to which other men were blind. And indeed the elder was seeing far beyond the courtroom. He was no longer concerned with what went on there.

That dream had returned to him so often during the past weeks that it had become a reality. He could sit in the courtroom, deafen his ears to testimony and argument, blind his eyes to the mortal scene, and see himself before his house, protesting his righteousness, declaring his right to defy the Almighty and rebel. As Job he preached to his congregation. His words were true and good. Yet serene eyes reproached him and he heard a calm voice— "It has not stood. It has not endured. The hand of your jealous God has fallen. It is the time now to submit, in humility and faith." And he replied, "Yet will I keep on my feet before the Almighty." Now it was a war in his own soul. He was no longer concerned with the affairs of men. . . .

Rosalie of Denver told her story. Her eyes never left Elder Morgan all the time she was in the witness chair. Her fancy made of him an image of majesty and power. At last, she felt, she had seen and known a man. She had learned to suffer under man the brute, to play contemptuously with man the fool, and now at last she had learned to feel awe and reverence for man the hero. The thought that she had the power to save him made her tremble. She told her story in a manner that left the jury utterly convinced. And an hour after her testimony was given Jim Brandon was riding for the Seven Devils Mountains, escaping from arrest for murder. . . .

She was not hurt when Elder Morgan failed to thank her after his acquittal. He was surrounded by members of his church. She drew near and heard him announce solemnly that he was prepared to defend his membership and ministry in the true church before his congregation. His countenance had not lost a trace of its stern gravity. His gaze was still on visions remote from this courtroom, and the deep, unwavering light did not change in his eyes. Rosalie of Denver watched the tall, erect, square-shouldered figure until it disappeared from the courtroom. She remembered him in all the other aspects in which she had seen him. . . . Pearl Peebles, shuffling nervously toward her, was astonished to see an angelic smile on the face of Rosalie of Denver. At last life had wrought an image for her to admire in a beautiful glow.

"I must hear him before his congregation," said Rosalie to the still-amazed Peebles. "Will you drive me out to Sunnyside Sunday, and keep quiet? I wouldn't want anybody to know."

"Hell, yes," said Pearl Peebles. "But I don't see the idy."

"I don't give a damn if you don't," said Rosalie, recovering her professional manner. "That's none of your business, that part."

VI

SO THEY DROVE on a Sunday morning to the Sunnyside meeting-house. They slipped quietly into a back seat just as Elder Morgan was announcing his text:

"I went mourning without the sun. I stood up, and I cried in the congregation."

Then the elder was silent, and his gaze descended

on the congregation. It was answered by a hundred pairs of eyes, which stared in unblinking solemnity at the figure towering above the pulpit and the great Bible. The shades of the South windows were lowered against the rays of the sun, and the congregation was cast in gloom. Against the darkly stained wall the black coat of the elder, his beard and his disordered hair, were obscure. His hands hung from sight behind the pulpit. The pallor of his cheeks and forehead was like old ivory in that dim light. His eyes had a steady, cavernous glow.

The elder said:

"Brothers and sisters." He paused, until a sigh which had risen from the congregation had subsided. "Yore elder, John Eccles Morgan, a native of Kaintucky, a minister in the true church since he come of age, stands before you in conviction of mortal sin. I have broken one of the inexorable commandments of the Lord our God. The law of man has held me blameless and given me my freedom. But the verdict of man's law does not suffice, and ought not to suffice, for you, my congregation, in yore judgment as to my fitness for the ministry of God and membership in the true church. So I am come before you to bare my soul for you to see whatever evil blackens it and whatever good it may reveal, and to judge thereby.

"I am a burdened man."

His voice had descended solemnly from deep note to deep note, and now it rested in the very depths of feeling. As he fell silent the elder looked up from his congregation, looked far beyond and above the people. For an instant his eyes were fiery. The veiled woman on the back seat subdued her breath until she could feel the beating of her heart. For her the heroic image lived again. Then the elder's gaze returned to his con-

gregation. . . . The black shadow of his beard moved above the holy Book. . . .

"Many afflictions and tribulations have been visited upon me, yet I have never cried out against the justice and mercy of the Almighty. I have said that if it was His will to afflict His minister, one of His elect, His will be done. But sayin' so I have ever justified my righteousness unto Him; I have always kept on my feet before Almighty God. I have been steadfast in my strength and pride; I have never bowed down in humility and abnegation. Yet I have been woefully afflicted.

"Yea, I am a burdened man.

"I stand now, brothers and sisters, in the midst of my last and powerfulest tribulation. I am on trial before the Lord our God. He will manifest His justice to you, His elect, by the workin's of the Holy Sperit. He will judge my true utterance. I will be inspired to speak so that you may judge whether I have sinned by livin' in rebelliousness against the will of the Almighty or whether the sword in my hand was the sword of righteousness used for His Name's sake.

"In my youth Satan struggled violently for my soul. I come of an irreligious race. We was fighters, drinkers, horse-racers and gamblers, us Morgans, in our Kaintucky country. I was a brand plucked from the burnin' by an angel's hand. The fire would not be quenched. I carried it into the ministry of God, for His power and His glory.

"Some of you, my brothers and sisters, have known me since the airly days of this church. Some of you were with me in the Missouri wilderness and accepted my ministry there and followed me over the plains. In this wild valley we labored together to grow a vineyard for the Lord. Dangers encompassed us about.

There was never any peace. Indians raided our settlement. Desperate godless men invaded the land.

"I toiled with spade and ax, with oxen and plow, to build a home for the saint who had followed me through all, even as her namesake of Scripture followed Boaz. I fought with rifle and pistol to make the church of God and her home secure. In all that surely I did not sin.

"But in my sperit I might of sinned against God. I gloried in my strength for battle; I was proud in victory. I sought battle wherever the threat of it appeared. I did not go forth to it in humility and prayer, but in strength and pride. I fought for my own glory rather than for the peace of God. I stood up in my congregation and preached to them on the wanderin's and wars of the chosen people; I preached to them of Joshua and of David the King; and as their righteousness was justified in Scripture so I justified mine.

"I rejoiced in my youth, I rejoiced in all my years, and then it was the will of the Almighty to bring me unto judgment. My eldest fell in sickness, and was taken away. My second was drowned when he tried to ford a flood-swelled creek. I was rebellious under the loss. My companion, my saint, begged me to humiliate and abnegate myself before God. She said He was warnin' me from the depths of His mercy, and if I still kept on my feet before Him, His hand would smite.

"I would not hearken. I said I would bear my burden without complaint, that I would not cry out against the Almighty in my sorrow, but I would still justify my righteousness. And then He took my saint. I was left companionless, and so I have lived. I have not yielded, neither have I rebelled . . . until of late, under my last affliction. Now there is war in my soul,

I have sinned, and His hand has smitten me at last; or my righteousness shall be justified, and I shall not be called upon to repent in dust and ashes before my congregation.

"Many of you knew the companion of my airy ministry here. You knew her meekness and submission in trial. I have heard her voice from a vision urgin' humility and abnegation upon me. Even so I have heard in another vision my justification in the words of Job."

The elder's voice halted on a note of weakness. He raised his hand, rested it on the holy Book, as though to support himself. He bowed his head. Pearl Peebles, awed and uncomfortable in the shadows of the back wall, was startled by a tense whisper—"Lord, don't let her pull him down! Lord, let him be what he is!" Pearl Peebles stared at Rosalie of Denver with wide eyes. Why, *she* couldn't be praying! But she was! What if the spirit had got to working in her? What if she should go into a shouting fit? . . . He felt the sweat start on his forehead—then the voice of the elder, proud and strong again, held him. Soon it rose into a shout, and sighs swept the congregation. The spirit was manifest!

"I stand now as a lonely tree. The storms of many years have beaten through my boughs: I have lived through the lightnings of many tribulations. Yea, I am blasted and rivened, yet I do not fall! And I shall not fall! I shall perish with my roots in my own soil, with my dead branches yet lifted in pride toward the great heavens!

"Yea, the power of the spirit is workin' in me now. Again the sword is in my hand, and it is a mighty blade! Yea, it is a sword of fire. It pierces the darkness, it cleaves the floor of Heaven! Yea—" the elder's clenched fists were now raised aloft, and he shouted in

trumpet blasts—"yea, now am I inspired, and the Hosts are revealed, and the Throne, and the Cloud, and the Voice! . . . Ah, it is a Voice of wrath! . . ."

The clenched fists crashed down on the Book. Over them the elder's eyes blazed upon his awe-stricken congregation; and it was the last time they were to see that light of strength, pride, defiance and rebellion; in that heaven-seeing transport the soul of a warrior was utterly extinguished; and now the congregation heard only the hoarse, quavering voice of an old preacher:

"And I am cast down— God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

He closed the great Bible, then turned from the pulpit, a stooped figure, a shaken man. He bowed his head, as in prayer, and said:

"The words of Job are ended. I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

It was over.

His ministry was saved. "The sperit was manifest," said his people among themselves. "A powerful sermon," they said to the elder, when he came down among them.

Rosalie of Denver raised her veil to watch the elder as he moved down the aisle. His shoulders sagged, his dull eyes and the lines which weakness showed so strongly in his face promised that the gates of age would soon close upon him. So Rosalie saw him as a desolated old man, and she pitied him, even as she wept for the image which his surrender had shattered. . . . Her fancy pictured the woman he had called his saint bearing him triumphantly away, his conqueror at last. . . . Rosalie shrugged her shoulders and curled her lips in a bitter smile. For the first time in her life she had made a fool of herself about a man.

It should be the last. Well . . . back to town now, and to the business of looking about for another faro king. . . . Back to the diamonds and spades, the dance and wine, the old life. . . . She needed a spree.

"Will you drink with me to-night, Peebles?" she said, as they drove back to town.

"Sure," he said, "though I don't much hold with Sunday drinkin'!"

"Well, then," said Rosalie of Denver, "here goes for hell!"

VII

PEARL PEEBLES sagged against the Overland's bar. He had long ago lost count of his beers, but he knew he was well-loaded.

"Yes, sir," he said, "I shore had a time with Rosalie beginnin' that Sunday night. Best of my life. She knowed how. Funny I'd remember the kind of wild look she got in her eyes ever' so often, when she'd lift a glass and say, 'Here's to men, though there's no damn' good in 'em; no, sir, there's no damn' good in men.' Never could figger why she done so much for the elder. They warn't no love in it, fer he was so old, and he never give her a look. Maybe she had some reason for wantin' to get even with Jim Brandon. I dunno. Anyway, Jim fin'ly give her her needin's. Met up with her in Butte and stuck her up with a knife down in Dublin Gulch. . . .

"Pore Rosalie, I'll never fergit her. . . . The elder? Well, he failed mighty fast after that Sunday, though his congregation kep' him. He never preached with much power any more. Jest about restin' in Abraham's bosom, eternal peace, humility afore the Lord, and the like of that.

"All good doctrine, mighty good, but not much power. Maybe you'll get a chance to hear him some Sunday, though he's got so feeble they don't let him preach much any more. But what a Hardshell elder he used to be! You ask any of the Dineses. . . .

"No; I don't reckon I'll take another. I always know when I got enough, and I got enough now. I won't take another; but I'll talk doctrine all night, if you want to listen; and if they's anything you want to know about irrigatin' or the irrigatin' country, you jest ask Pearl Peebles!"

IDYLS OF WESTERN YOUTH

HOMER IN THE SAGEBRUSH

I

THERE was a row of beer kegs along the back wall of the Horseshoe Saloon. On a keg in the middle of the row sat the ranch boy—alone. He sat there in the twilight, his elbows on his knees and his chin in his hands, mournfully watching the team-hands at the bar, mournfully glancing out over the splintery sidewalk and dusty street whenever the doors swung open, mournfully thinking of his wasted life. As the twilight deepened, the ranch boy's melancholy increased. Life was hardly worth living, he decided. Not when a man had lived sixteen healthy years and wasted every blamed one of them. Not when he was by nature such a weak, sinful creature that he seemed simply bound to chew tobacco and swear, get expelled from school, and then go hoboing, playing cards, drinking beer, even smoking cigarettes. Not when he had had the example of the prodigal son held up to him since he was knee-high, and yet on he went, wasting his substance, a regular weak, natural-born fool! It was simply no use, the ranch boy reflected sadly; here he was, getting along in years, and with so much foolishness and wickedness in his past life to look back on, that the time left for him couldn't hold much hope. And he couldn't say he hadn't been warned, either; in fact, he had been warned so much it had grown

tiresome listening to the church women tell about the end he was sure to come to. And here it was, just as they had prophesied. Here was another wasted life. . . . The ranch boy wondered how soon he'd be showing wrinkles now. He expected that the next time he combed he'd begin to find gray hairs. . . .

The lamps were lighted and they shone a mellow, friendly glow over the silvered floor and the black old bar. The light made sparkling winks in the glasses of whisky. It made the foamy mugs of beer appear like blooms in the red hands of the workingmen. The ceiling, smeared with grime in daylight, was veiled in shadows and thin, curling drifts of pipe and cigarette smoke. The old mirror was now a bright frame for the bartender, a chubby, bald-headed, red-faced man with a straggly mustache. His motions were lazy as he set up the liquor and swabbed the bar. The talk of the drinking team-hands was a roaring hum, except when it was broken by laughs or bawls.

The ranch boy listened cynically. Most of the talk was grand boasts about the great railroad building jobs and the reclamation projects where the team-hands, as they were careful to emphasize, had played parts of supreme importance. The ranch boy had lived in camp with many of these men on the Shoshone Irrigation Project. That job was his first one away from home. It had taught him much. In camp the team-hands talked only about their great drunks and their performances with wicked women; there the stories were bawdy, the songs ribald, the adventures recounted blazing with alcohol and stirring with love raw and unrestrained. Here in town the same men romanticized their labors instead of their adventures. The ranch boy remembered a saying, that men did their best work in the saloons and their best drinking and women-

chasing on the job. It was so. These men were all plain liars and fools. The ranch boy wished mournfully that he had realized it sooner—before his money was spent with them. But it was not until to-night that he realized how men wasted their lives, how he had wasted his own. The ranch boy reflected on his past. Ah, if he had only hearkened! They had warned him, the church women had, that he had better pay some mind to what was told him. But he hadn't. And here he was. . . .

All the wasted years, the years on the old homestead back in the sagebrush hills. The time all frittered away in foolishness and sin. Never getting any good from school, never once trying to make his soul better with the chances he had in the valley Sunday-school and church, always feeling stubborn when the church women lectured him; shuffling his feet, staring down at them, thinking only of how soon he could get away and smoke a pipe of Union Leader or a Bull Durham cigarette with Ern Saling up behind Ern's father's calf corral. Not satisfied with sinning himself, but forever leading poor Ern into wickedness, getting one licking after the other. Teaching him to smoke, chew, swear and ride bucking calves, and Ern such a good and serious boy when his folks brought him from Kansas. Why, he had once even coaxed Ern into pretending that they were Bud Winkle and Russ Hicks on a drunk in the Copper King Saloon; and Ern's mother had caught the two of them staggering all over the calf corral, swearing for all they were worth, daring the sheep-herders to stand up and fight like men—and there he'd been the cause of Ern's mother going into hysterics and then fainting so bad that Ern's father had to go for a doctor. That was only one time. He'd kept it up, gone on wasting his life in that style. The worst was his habit of lying. So often he'd get a gang

of boys around him and then he'd tell them the most outrageous lies by the hour. They'd listen with their mouths open and their eyes bugging, then go home and tell their mothers, and there'd be some more talk about sending him to the reform school. The church women had warned him time and again, even the Adventist and Campbellite ministers had taken a hand. But it had been no use. He was bound and determined to go on wasting his life. And here he was. Yes, sir, here he was. It had happened as everybody had always prophesied. . . .

Sitting with empty pockets on a beer keg against the smoky back wall of the Horseshoe Saloon—alone. Cynically aware of the emptiness in the boasts of the men drinking at the bar. Bitterly aware of the meanness of the pretenses in which they lived. Had they not hailed him as a friend when he arrived in town three days ago, with eighty-five dollars in his pockets, and in his heart an eager yearning to live for himself some of the blazing adventures he had heard about in camp? They had promised effusively that he should live them. And what had come of it? Buying rounds of drinks at this bar, himself held down to small beers by the bartender. A couple of feeds in the jungles at the riverside near town. A night with the gang in a place called Slim Annie's—and that had left him sick all over, as though he had eaten something rotten. Wickedness and sin. Wasting his substance. And now the team-hands had entirely forgotten their old friend. The ranch boy didn't care. He didn't want anything to do with such men. Everything had simply gone to the bad. There wasn't anything more to live for. And probably he wouldn't live much longer now; judging by the way he felt, he was sure to age mighty fast. He didn't like the idea of going to hell, but it couldn't be helped. Every-

thing was his own fault. He had been warned, yet he had wasted his life. Here he was . . . nothing more. . . .

II

A LEAN, tall figure loomed through the swinging doors, then proceeded in a straight, majestic stride to the bar. The team-hands were stricken motionless and dumb by its approach, as though it were an apparition. Eyes stared unblinkingly; a hand here held a beer mug tilted over a spittoon, the bearded mouth above it ready to blow off the foam; there another hand poised a whisky bottle in the air, motionless over an empty glass; even Red Grabby and Burly Hughes, the two walking bosses, cut off a bawling argument as suddenly as though the earth had opened under their feet. Poker Tom Davis was at the bar!

The ranch boy also stared. He felt a fresh stir of life in his heart. Curiosity, fancy and admiration lighted up. Thinking so mournfully of the cheapness of men, the vanity of life, he had forgotten that sometimes heroes shone gloriously over the scene. Poker Tom Davis had entered the Horseshoe Saloon! How magnificent he was among the common men!

Out at the reclamation camp Poker Tom Davis had been the star figure in the Saturday night and Sunday poker games. But it was the mystery about him that had fascinated the ranch boy. Anybody could tell, by the language he used, by his nightly shaving and his frequent baths that he was an educated man. He never spoke of his past, and the team-hands were always careful in their gossip about him, for he packed a gun on his hip. The ranch boy learned, however, that Poker Tom Davis had once been a Mississippi River gambler.

He heard a word or two about a killing on a steamboat over some love affair or other; he learned that Poker Tom had come West with the team-hands for dramatic reasons; and naturally he made the gambler his hero.

Poker Tom's lean, tall figure was set off by a face with a profile as clean-cut as an Indian's. The skin was swarthy and the lines seemed to have been carved into it with a knife. His expression was always solemn and severe, but his thin mouth had always got a kind, humorous twist to it whenever he addressed a remark to the ranch boy. Then his coal-black eyes didn't have such a hard glitter, and the heavy eyebrows relaxed and raised. When they were drawn down in a frown they made Poker Tom's look appear to be crouching, ready for a deadly spring. His forehead was broad and high. Straight back from its crown waved a mass of iron-gray hair. It seemed to the ranch boy that Poker Tom never spoke; he simply moved his lips and words rolled forth like music from a horn. Words so large and grand that one only listened to the sound. Poker Tom inspired fear in the other team-hands. No doubt they saw him as a favored son of hell, with the devil always on his side. The ranch boy had a more human regard for Poker Tom Davis. To him the gambler was the first romantic hero he had ever known. If there was a chance, now, for him to become such a glamorously wicked figure as Poker Tom, he would not mind going to hell, he would not regret his sinful, wasted years.

Poker Tom Davis stood as straight as a pine before the bar and gazed upon the team-hands. There was an unusual benevolence in his eyes. He smiled. At once the team-hands came to life. They set their glasses on the bar, leaned over them, and bawled greetings to Poker Tom. Relief sounded in their voices.

They knew now that Poker Tom was on one of his friendly, good-humored drunks. He had no quarrel to settle with any one in the Horsehoe's barroom. More likely he had some speech to make, some story to tell.

"Remember that time in the dump over't Winne-mucca?" Red Grabby asked Burly Hughes. "When he'd come clear of bumpin' off Jailhouse Whitey, it was. How he tramped in like this and between drinks give us the full and entire history of how the French one time killed all their kings."

"Yeah," whispered Burly Hughes. "Bloodiest damn' thing I ever listened to! All head-choppin' on a rig called the gillertine. Lot about sportin' women, too. Powerful interestin', I recollect."

There were other whispers along the bar, until Poker Tom began to speak. Certainly he was in a good humor, for he was giving an account of himself. He had gone to Boise, he said, stayed sober, played in a solo game for a solid week, and won five hundred dollars. Then he had discovered the most venerable and benignant bourbon that ever trickled enchantingly over the tongue of man.

"But it is vanity, my friends, to adumbrate the past," said Poker Tom, with a motion of his right hand as though he were tossing the past aside. "Like the prodigal son, I have wasted my substance. So farewell, glory of Kentucky! Farewell, grandeur of her distillations! I feed on husks. I drink in kind. All hands promenade to the bar!"

The ranch boy's heart skipped a beat when he heard Poker Tom Davis, the famous and mysterious gambler, echo his own thoughts in rolling speech. He felt a pang of sympathy for Poker Tom. He knew how the hero was feeling. He wished he could tell him so.

He kept a wishful, worshipful gaze steadily on

Poker Tom. As the bartender set up the bottles and glasses, the gambler turned and looked about the room. The look twinkled with friendly recognition when it rested on the ranch boy, sitting on a beer keg—alone. Then he beckoned with one long, slim finger. The ranch boy tangled his feet and almost went sprawling to the floor in his haste to respond to the gesture. Poker Tom made room by his side. And he said to the bartender:

"This friend of mine is beardless and of diminutive stature. Do not let his appearance deceive you. Serve him, Allesandro, and he may some day do you honor. Set him up a small beer."

Oh, glory! What thought now of the wasted years!

III

AGAIN he was the boy, ripe for any deviltry, with wicked desires tingling to his bones, and with sinful notions whispering through his head. Life promised another adventure before he should come to his bad end and be a lost soul in hell. The ranch boy saw himself being taken up by the famous Poker Tom Davis as his gambling partner. For Poker Tom kept talking down to him, keeping that kindly twist to his thin mouth and the friendly shine in his black eyes, ignoring all the other team-hands, even Red Grabby and Burly Hughes, the walking-bosses. The ranch boy was so excited he understood hardly a word of Poker Tom's speech. There was a question:

"The circumference of your capacity for the juice of the barley, and its profundity are no doubt large and far?"

"Well—uh—yes and no," said the ranch boy, blushing.

"The reply judicious," said Poker Tom gravely.

His speech rolled on. The ranch boy was glad there were no more questions. He wanted only to stand by Poker Tom and revel in the sinful notions that bubbled in his head. He wished that Ern Saling was here. He could imagine Ern's eyes growing wider and wider as he told how wicked a gambler Poker Tom really was; and wouldn't Ern be simply sick with envy, though, when he learned that his old friend was to be Poker Tom's gambling partner?

A second small beer made the ranch boy's imaginings brighter, sinfuller and more enjoyable than ever. He scarcely heard even the sound of Poker Tom's speech now. He imagined Ern Saling leaving the Horseshoe Saloon, going back to the valley, and getting home just as the Ladies' Aid was meeting. There he would tell how wicked the ranch boy had actually become, how he was a soul surely lost to hell, being a gambler now, the partner of a man so brazenly wicked that he went openly by the name of Poker Tom Davis. The ranch boy chuckled to himself as he saw the whole Ladies' Aid thrown into a wild commotion by Ern's story, as he heard every church woman there telling how she'd always known such an unmanageable brat was sure to come to a bad end. The faces of the church women would flush up, and they would just about burst their blood vessels, because there was nothing they could do about it. For here he was! The ranch boy had never imagined anything more amusing and charming in his life.

By and by the tickling fancy cooled and faded. The ranch boy noticed that he hadn't had a beer for some time. So he edged up closer to Poker Tom, where he was sure to be noticed when another round was ordered. But Poker Tom wasn't ordering now. He was

telling a tale. The team-hands, the ranch boy, even liquor, were forgotten. Before Poker Tom's eyes were only the visions which his words evoked. Into his ears flowed the music of his own speech, smothering all other sounds. He was the rapt orator now, under his own spell, oblivious to all else.

He stood with his back to the bar, a full glass of whisky at his elbow. Misty fire glowed from under his half-closed eyelids, glowed in a gaze that was not for the spotted and streaked back wall of the barroom, but was for something out and away, something mysterious and far. His speech rolled slowly and with a force that made it seem he was speaking to some one outside. Every so often his voice rose into the rhythms of poetry; then he spoke in the language of Homer in tones that shone and rang with the power of Homer's verbal thunder; for Poker Tom Davis was telling the story of the *Iliad*.

Homer in the sagebrush, Homer free of the classroom and the library, his story carried in the soul of a rebel and a bard to the raw Western lands of a new world, and there, in the mean saloon of a sagebrush town, to flash free on winged words and enchant with its magical glory the imagination of a sagebrush boy! Oh, Homer, hero of poetry in an age when bards were also men! You would not have scorned that obscure scene! There a brawny hand smote the lyre. There your epic was sung from a throat that could clang and roar. There your tale was sown on a virgin imagination in words that were fertile because they were a hero's. . . .

Red Grabby spoke in a whisper to Burly Hughes: "Poker Tom's steamed up high as I ever saw him. He don't know where the hell he is or ever was. Just listen, now. This'll be a show!"

The ranch boy heard that whisper, but he needed no urge. He was bewildered at first by the strangeness of his emotions and by his unfamiliarity with many of Poker Tom's words. Then the tale itself caught him and drew him close. The old, faraway times which he had only heard of through sermons, had regarded as stuff dead, buried, only to be repulsively exhumed in churches, lived now as a glowing, singing mystery. He was enveloped in strange and delightful sound. A cloud of light filled the barroom, obscuring even Poker Tom. In it moved the figures of an old war, a glorious war that seemed to have happened in the Bible times, or maybe before—maybe in another world, for the heroes in it certainly didn't seem to be of this earth, thought they *must* have lived they were so alive now. . . . The ranch boy saw the camp and the towering walls on the Trojan plain. . . . He stood before the tent of Achilles. . . .

IV

SLIM ANNIE and the church women vanished before the vision of Helen. The sagebrush hills where he had worked and played all his years were submerged in the mind of the ranch boy, under a scene that was as alive as any that had ever actually spread before his eyes. A speckless blue sky arched down to the deeper blue of a smooth sea. Not a shine of light was on that sea, but the beach sparkled with golden sands. The masts of the anchored ships towered toward a sun that had about it vague images of silver horses, a chariot, and a sky-driving god. The walls of the city raced to vast distances on an immeasurable plain. Banners of many colors waved over the snowy tents of the Argives' camp. Towering over the whole

scene was a cloud-capped mountain, the abode of the gods.

The ranch boy visioned all that, and then the story began to blaze before his eyes. He saw the sallies from the gates of Troy, giants in shining armor ranging on for battle, with the Trojan hero, Hector, in the van. Stallions reared and snorted in the Greek lines, hoofs thundered and chariot wheels roared. Then the scene seemed to cloud over; the picture was a chaos of battle. Armor, shields and swords flashed all over the plain from among the masses of fighting horses and men. Armor clanged as the wounded and dying fell. The beautiful Helen watched from a tower. Achilles sulked in his tent. Their figures vague in the clouds about the mountain top, the gods watched the war and quarreled about their favorites among the warriors below.

Through that scene the tale blazed and thundered on for the boy from the sagebrush hills. A slim figure in blue jumper and overalls and under an enormous black hat standing before a gambler and a killer, a man devotedly feared in all the construction camps. Hobo laborers on each side of him: men in faded, sweat-stained work-clothes; bleary-eyed and purple-cheeked old men, with hands tough and crooked as limbs of buckbrush from years of terrific manual labor, their innards whisky-eaten, yet with the spirit to cling to whatever glory they could grasp from life, and the will to celebrate it in story and song; rebellious-eyed and hard-faced young men, blindly fighting every law and convention that touched them, yet hot with pride in the triumph of their bodies over miserable labor, their power to bear toil like work-horses, and in their unyielding savagery which made them tear loose in violent sprees and then go roving and fighting like the untamed creatures of the jungle. Among such men

the ranch boy listened breathlessly to the Homeric tale, until the victory of Achilles was told. He was a true hero-bard who could dominate such a scene, such men. So Poker Tom Davis, camp gambler with a mysterious past, transported the ranch boy to a grand land of the imagination. . . .

To tell the tale, Poker Tom Davis was surely very drunk to begin with. When he was done he swung to the bar and ordered another round of drinks. He lifted his glass, and his voice sounded through the barroom in a ringing shout:

"Gentlemen! Let us drink to Homer, the bard of heroes!"

He drank, returned his glass to the bar; then, suddenly, he clutched the bar's edge with both hands, and his tall body swayed from side to side, his head nodded, and his eyes opened and closed in slow, heavy blinks.

The ranch boy watched him, with eyes that were unseeing at first. The glory of the Trojan plains was slow to fade. Then, through a clearing haze, the ranch boy saw Poker Tom straighten up before the bar. He turned very slowly. He was frowning severely now, his look cloudy and forbidding. He took one deliberate step—another one—and then he stalked on a dead line to the door. No one dared to follow him, and the barroom was quiet for a full minute after he was gone. Then Red Grabby laughed. The team-hands sighed with relief as one man. They relaxed. Burly Hughes ordered a round of drinks. There was a mighty clink of glasses. The team-hands bawled and laughed over the story they had heard.

It was all just another story to them, something like the ones they told about their own lives—their stories of mighty labors, mammoth jungle feeds, terrific battles in camp and saloon, pursuing and stealing

women, their rovings over the world. A man with the devil in him had told this tale, so they had listened with admiration, so they admired it now.

"Talk about a Philadelphia lawyer usin' words!" exclaimed Burly Hughes. "Ain't nobody this side of hell in it with Poker Tom! Lookit the gazoony here. Left him paralyzed! Hey, punk, want a snort of red-eye?"

V

THE RANCH BOY jumped at the words. Slowly he returned to reality. He felt weak. He knew he looked pale. Yes, he guessed a snort of whisky would do him good. The fiery liquor made a blaze in his head. He wanted to talk about Poker Tom, about that old war.

"That was quite a story," said the ranch boy to Burly Hughes.

"Hell, it was nothin'. Oughter hear him tell about the French kings and all their bloody doin's. How they fin'ly got their heads chopped off with gillertines, and the like of that. Bloodier'n hell!"

Red Grabby shoved himself between the ranch boy and the bar.

"Say, Burly, you was talkin' of Winnemucca. Well, I was bossin' a rock gang outta there on the Western Pacific. Bohunks they was—"

All the glory faded. The team-hands were their own men again, boasting of their great labors. The ranch boy backed away. He went out through the swinging doors. Up the street and in the light that came from the windows of the hotel he saw Poker Tom Davis walking with slow, deliberate steps. He was keeping himself on his feet by propping his arm against the wall with each step. He turned into the door. He was gone.

The ranch boy sat down on the sidewalk. The night breeze blew across his face. It bore the scent of the sage. Moonlight showered about him. It softened the look of the dusty street and made the sagebrush plain beyond the railroad tracks appear restful and calm. Laughs sounded from behind the doors of the Horse-shoe. For an hour and more he dreamed of an ancient war. The pictures would not glow for him again, but he remembered the tale. Some of Poker Tom's grand words still rolled in his head. He murmured them, his lips caressing the lovely sounds. . . .

At last he felt very tired. He guessed he had better go to bed. He needed a good rest. There was going to be a lot to do to-morrow, a lot to do from now on. He didn't know what it would be—maybe Poker Tom would take him for a gambling partner—anyhow, he was going to start life all over again in the morning. You could bet your sweet life there wouldn't be any more wasted years! The fine times ahead! They glowed before him till he went to sleep.

VI

IN the morning Poker Tom Davis was sober and sick. When the ranch boy spoke to him he returned the greeting with his cold, crouching stare. The ranch boy decided that he wasn't quite ready to become Poker Tom's gambling partner. But he ventured another question.

"That story you told last night. I'd like to hear some more about it."

"Go to the books, young man," said Poker Tom. "Read Homer." He was sprawled in a hotel lobby chair. His shoulders were hunched down, his chin rested on his chest. "Homer," he said again, in a low

voice. He half-closed his eyes. He seemed to be going to sleep, but the ranch boy waited, and at last heard a whisper— "Ah, the sad, sad days, the wasted years!"

The ranch boy felt frightened and awed. He retreated softly, nervously, from the gloomy lobby to the hot, brilliant outdoors of the August morning. He saw a freighting outfit heading across the railroad tracks for the road that stretched away over the sagebrush plain to the reclamation camps. He guessed he would catch that wagon and go to work again. Go out to work again, and just be common. Somehow he didn't want to be like Poker Tom Davis after all. Sitting in the dark and mourning over the wasted years, when the sun shone so bright, when there was such a lot to do, so many fine times ahead. . . .

The wheels of a freight wagon rattled over the lava rock of the desert road. A drift of dust hovered over the tracks behind. All around sagebrush reached in gray dips and rolls to the blue sky. The ranch boy's legs dangled over the wagon's tailgate. He knew that the freighter, two wagons ahead, could not hear him above the rumble and clatter of the outfit, so he shouted through the grand story with all his might, in such terms as these:

"I'll see you in hell first, Agamemnon!"

Achilles sulked in his tent in an Idaho desert. Homer rode on a freight wagon through the sagebrush lands.

THE LITTLE ANGEL

I

THERE'S a lot of things can make a young man of eighteen feel like hell," said the young hobo bitterly.

"For example?" said Alice Duval.

"Well, this parlor here. It makes me simply burn to own one like it, with its pickshers and all. But I know I never will, for you got to be rich."

"What else makes you feel like hell?" said Alice Duval gently.

"Well, this Cellini book of your'n. It tore me all up inside. I'd never dreamed there could a' been such a life. It makes me sick to think how I've lived no better'n a mule all my days here in the sagebrush country, when here's a man who's lived such a grand and glorious life among cardinals and popes, dukes and kings. Well, I simply burn to live like Cellini myself, but I can't. Even if I had his gift and his chances I couldn't. Not with my bringin' up."

"Is that all?"

"No. There's you. That's what makes me feel the worst, I guess."

She said nothing just then, and the young hobo, too, was silent. His head was bowed so that his chin rested on his chest. Locks of yellow hair tumbled over a forehead that was pale above the deep tan of his cheeks. There was a moody glow in the dark gray eyes

that stared at the tan button shoes, so glossily new that they seemed to blush self-consciously as they rested on the plushy, wine-colored carpet. The young hobo's hands, large from labor and brown from the wind and sun, sprawled on the red plush of the sofa. His left hand was exposed to the light, where it lay by his side. On his right hand reposed the vague and delicate shadow of Alice Duval. Suddenly he felt and saw a flush of rosy light. Her hand was on his own! . . .

"Tell me why you feel so," said Alice Duval.

The young hobo slowly drew up his gaze. He saw the tip of a black satin slipper and the gleam of a silver buckle below ruffles of black silk. Then blue smoke curled into his view, and he saw the white of a cigarette, and a hand nearly as white under a dazzle of diamonds. The hand rested on a knee that seductively revealed its roundness through the sheen of her black silk dress. His gaze meandered up a slim white arm, over a shapely white shoulder that shone modestly under a spangled black stripe; and then his gaze was utterly captured in a cloud of blonde hair through which bits of blue sky shone and drew him upward and on till he seemed to be alone with his dream again, alone with his dream in a darkness of stars, and he spoke as he had in the dream. . . .

"I'll tell you. I'll tell you just how it is. I'll tell you what I've been dreamin' of. It's like I was on a gold cloud and sailin' away to the moon, and you are the queen of the moon. I can look up at the stars and say they are what you wear on your hands. I said that when I left here last night, and then I heard a breeze in a rosebush when I passed, and I said that whisper in the roses was you talkin'. . . . I guess you think I'm crazy."

"No." She did not smile. "Tell me more."

"Well, there's this. Something I got out of the Cellini book. I could see you back in them old times, a reg'lar queen among the cardinals and dukes, the popes and kings, and me a grand hero like this Cellini, with ever'-body jealous and against me, but the more they'd give it to me, the harder and better I'd fight back. I'd be the kind of mighty fighter and a master artist like he was, and you'd be my queen. They'd all be after you, all the cardinals and popes, dukes and kings, but you wouldn't give them a look, with a man like me around.

"That's what I dream of, and it certainly makes me feel like hell to realize that here I am, a man who's growed up in this sagebrush country as ignorant as a mule, and here you are, a—uh—a—"

The blue eyes which had been glowing into his own suddenly sparkled with a frosty light. The hard tinkle of glass striking glass sounded in her voice as she spoke.

"I'll say it for you. A woman in a parlor house!"

"That's it," admitted the young hobo miserably. "Here we are this way, and it somehow spoils ever'-thing."

For a moment she regarded him coldly, the lines showing about her eyes. Then, suddenly, Alice Duval softened and laughed. He felt the soft pressure of her hand.

"Listen!" she said. "Do you dream of saving me from this—this life?"

"Oh, if I was only rich!" sighed the young hobo.

"Are you curious about my ruin?"

"I know it was never your fault," he declared. "I know you must of been put upon."

"Once," sighed Alice Duval, "I was the Little Angel."

"I knowed it!" declared the young hobo. "I knowed you was!"

"You understand!" Her voice was choked, as though she were about to cry.

"I do!" The young hobo's heart throbbed with sympathy. The first vague figures of another romantic vision began to glow in his mind. "You tell me your story, Alice Duval. Maybe I can help you to quit this ter'ble life."

"Does Cellini speak now?" asked Alice Duval.

"No," said the young hobo frankly, after reflection. "I guess you'd of been looked at differ'nt in his time. It seems like a woman was never ruint that way then. It's differ'nt now."

"Very different. Every one of my girls here in the Paris House has to tell the story of her life, sometimes a dozen times in an evening. And the story must be sad. Our visitors will not have it otherwise. There are no Cellinis here. There are only men who would save us from our terrible life. So we must have sad stories. We were once little angels. We were ruined by Casanovas."

"Who are they?" asked the young hobo curiously.

"You must hear nothing of Casanova for many years," said Alice Duval. "I fear you were hardly ready for Cellini. However—"

Her voice broke sharply and she was silent. Her stare was fixed intensely on the dark velvet portières over the doorway to the hall. The young hobo's eyes followed her look. The intoxicating sense of the two of them being remote from life left him. He saw tables, bottles, glasses, liquor glowing in the soft rosy light, the faces of men, the bare arms and shoulders of women, a blue haze of smoke, and then he saw the man. The arch of his bushy black eyebrows, the sweep

and curl of his mustache, the swarthiness of his complexion and the brilliance of his black eyes stamped him in the mind of the young hobo as a Mexican. But he was dressed and barbered magnificently, and there was authority in the gesture of his beckoning hand.

"I'll come back," said Alice Duval.

The young hobo hardly breathed as he watched her rise and go. She drifted away from him like a figure in a dream. She stopped before the man who looked like a Mexican, her white fingers fluttered over his black sleeve as he spoke to her, but he only frowned. The portières waved about them, and were empty and still. . . .

"It's that damn' Pindo," said Imogene. "He's got her foul somehow. He'll get her stewed on champagne and nick her for a couple hunderd. . . . What makes you look so blue? Don't you love me to-night, deary?"

"Aw, shut up! Get th' hell!"

He knew how to handle one like Imogene.

II

THE PARLOR of the Paris House was a large, high-ceilinged room, the loveliest in its decoration and the richest in its furnishing the young hobo had ever seen. Rose-colored lights in heavy copper fixtures shone like bouquets from the walls and corners. Above them oil paintings of nude women revealed seductive curves and colors in misty lights. Shadows and the drift of smoke drew over the high ceiling a twilight haze. The carpet, the portières and the curtains were wine-red, and the chairs and sofas were upholstered in plush of a lighter hue. The tables were mahogany, heavily carved.

Three nights ago the sumptuous scene had first enchanted the young hobo's eyes. The Paris House in

the railroad town of Pocatello was famous all over Idaho. It had long been his dream to enter it. Three nights ago, dressed in a blue serge suit and a new pair of tan button shoes, a hundred dollars in his pocket, he had swaggered in, and ordered a woman and wine. Then, while he was trying valiantly to achieve a sense of ease in all this magnificence, to feel that the women in their silk dresses were, after all, no different from the common kind in the cribs, he was smitten by the vision of Alice Duval. Her hand lay limp and warm in his, her shoulders gleamed, her blue eyes smiled into his own, and her blonde hair shone like a golden cloud. She blinded him to all else in the parlor, even after she left him with Imogene.

With Imogene! That had been a sickening experience, with the vision of Alice Duval tormenting him. But he had gotten through it somehow, and was allowed to sit alone and wait for another sight of the beautiful madam of the house. When he saw her it seemed like lightning had flashed into the room. He saw her blonde head bending over tables, bending and rising, and it was a cloud of gold that rose and fell. He heard her laugh, and silver chimes rang in his ears, though he had never heard chimes of any kind. She wore stars on her hands, her voice was the sound of an angel's harp, her shoulders and arms were moonlight—she was the queen of the moon, was Alice Duval, and when she moved, with a soft rustle of silk, flowers nodded and whispered in a soft breeze under the moon and stars. . . . She spoke to him! She sat by his side! Ah, God!

"You—you certainly got some—uh—beautiful pickshers," he stammered, and felt like an idiot.

She told him about her pictures, speaking rapidly, in a high, nervous voice. Her eyes were starry, her

cheeks were flushed under their rouge, and her hands moved constantly in pointless gestures. Her pictures were from the best galleries of Europe, she said. Ah, Europe, and would she ever see it again! The sparkle of a tear shone in her eye, and the heart of the young hobo ached. He yearned to tell her she should see Europe again, even if he had to rob a bank, but words could not rise through the heat of his throat. Her voice ran nervously on. . . .

She spoke of famous paintings and sculptures; with word and gesture she pictured their beauty and the romance of their creation and life; and the imagination of the young hobo caught fire so that in a drift of light he saw himself and Alice Duval walking together along solemn corridors of the Old World. Until now this Old World had meant to him no more than a despised region from which came wretched rivals in labor. The beauty of Alice Duval transported him to a higher vision, one from which he was never to descend. Never to forget them, he heard, for the first time, the names of Leonardo and Raphael, of Phidias and Michelangelo, of St. Peter's and the marble glories of the Vatican. The Church of Rome lost for him the hobgoblin shape that had been carved for him by harsh and violent sermons in sagebrush churches. With Alice Duval he visioned the spires of venerable cathedrals, and with her he walked under monumental shadows to their altars. In his emotion every word of hers was clasped and held fast.

She had fallen under the spell of her own words. The tenseness left her voice, and she spoke more slowly. Then her hands were quiet. She relaxed imperceptibly, until he noticed that her eyes were half-closed. He moved uneasily and she stared at him with wide, startled eyes.

"Why have I talked all this to you?"

"I don't know," he replied stupidly, but in honesty.

"You're a funny one." She laughed. "You really listened. You've done me good, worlds. You look—you look like you'd been seeing things. Can't I do something for you, now, funny one?"

"You can tell me some more about the Old World. You can talk it all night, if you want to."

"La-la! I think you've had enough of that. I must go. I'll send Imogene over again."

"No you won't!"

"Well, then—good night."

Smiling, she arose, and he also got to his feet. He was profoundly conscious of all the others in the parlor now, and he felt horribly flustered. There were so many things he wanted to say, but he could say none at all. He felt an impulse to turn and run, to run out of the Paris House, to run on and on. . . . But her hand was on his arm. "One moment." He waited, while she passed behind a velvet curtain at the right of the sofa. She returned at once, carrying a book.

"Read this to-morrow," said Alice Duval, "then come and tell me about it."

Her book! It seemed to breathe and glow in his hand as he tramped from the Paris House to his room. The summer stars were dazzling above the dim street lights, and the cool night air was stirring with the smells of sagebrush wafted from the hills and of the coal smoke from the railroad yards. His dream freshened and bloomed. In it he moved gloriously with Alice Duval through the corridors of the Old World. . . . It was not until the next morning that he even read the title of the book. It was the autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini.

He read a great part of the lusty story that day, and when he went to call on Alice Duval again he swaggered into the Paris House as though he were the heroic Cellini himself. But he did not see Alice Duval. She was sick, said Imogene.

"She got herself all champagned up last night. That guy Pindo has her about nuts. . . . Aw, you're not leavin' so soon, deary? . . ."

Yes, he certainly was leaving so soon, and he did. He finished the story of Cellini that night and slept till noon. That night he again failed to see Alice Duval. He stayed on, in the hope of seeing her, but it was only to drink wine and to listen to Imogene tell tearfully how she had married a passenger conductor in Denver, and he ran off with a freight engineer's wife, and the engineer talked her into running off with him to Pocaloo, and here the engineer had run off to Butte with a biscuit-shooter, and so there was nothing left for Imogene but to take up with this sad life. She got little sympathy from the young hobo. Her story only got him to wondering how such a beautiful and educated woman as Alice Duval could have come to her ruin; and as he staggered to his room in the early hours of the morning his imagination rioted in visions of her being rescued from her terrible life by a young hobo who was really a famous Italian artist in disguise. Through a heavy-headed day the charming fancy survived. . . . It glowed its brightest now, as he waited upon her return. . . . Little did she think, did Alice Duval, as she approached the sofa, behind her a white-jacketed Chinaman carrying a tray with champagne and glasses, that he whom she thought was only a young hobo in a blue serge suit and tan button shoes, was in reality Tony Gattalo, the most famous artist of Italy, and a famous fighter to boot. . . .

III

HERE FOLLOWS the story heard by the famous Gattalo, master of art, conqueror of men, and protector of women, as he sat, in his disguise of a young hobo on a sofa in the Paris House, sipped champagne with the beautiful Alice Duval, and waited only to hear her sad history ere he acted to defend her from her enemies and save her for a noble life in the Old World.

She was known as the Little Angel (said Alice Duval) ere her third year was past. Her life was already sad. She had never known a mother's love; her only remembered parent was a railroad engineer, the weak-willed but kind-hearted Decapod Duval. He had begun his railroad career as a fireman on the Lehigh Valley in the late sixties. He was the first to fire a Decapod, the 2-10-wheeler that originated on the Lehigh Valley Railroad; that was ever his boast, and so he came to be known as Decapod Duval. He won his only fame on the Lehigh Valley, but the railroad was his moral ruin. The most loose and careless life known to American railroading was on the Lehigh Valley. Its tone was eloquently expressed in the ballad that begins:

It was down on the Lehigh Valley,
where me and my old pal, Lu. . . .

Alice was born in the midst of that abandoned Lehigh Valley life. What became of her mother she never knew, as her father would not tell. When she was old enough to realize the loss they were living in Buffalo. Her father was a switching engineer on the Erie. He was handsome then, as she first remembered him, even when he came home from the yards. His

eyes shone and his face beamed through the grease and soot so that he made her think of a black cloud streaked with lightning. She loved him a lot, though he was great trouble to care for. She began to care for him when she was only three, looking through the Buffalo saloons when it was time for him to come home. All the railroaders and bartenders soon knew her. Because of her long golden curls and her innocent blue eyes they began to call her the Little Angel.

The increasing influence of the Little Angel finally had a wholesome effect on Decapod Duval. He grew ashamed of himself, but the familiar call of the Buffalo barrooms was irresistible. So he decided to move to Omaha and get a new start on the Union Pacific. Alice remembered the years in Omaha as the happiest of her life, even though Decapod fell again under the curse of drink. She learned the joys of housekeeping, she learned new ways to guard her father on payday nights, and she learned just where to find him and just how to lead him home whenever he forgot his pledges and good resolutions. She also learned how to make use of her spare time, and she began to educate herself.

It was beautiful when Decapod would come in from the yards, with grease, cinders and soot all over his jeans and his handsome, dark face. (He'd be sober then, and show every kindness to his Little Angel, and every pride in her housekeeping. He swore time and again that there wasn't another five-year-old in the whole nation who could beat her at keeping house and taking care of a man. He was proud, too, of the way she was educating herself, though at times he affected a melancholy regard for her ambitions, saying that he expected she would become so learned and wise she would have no more use for her ignorant, drunken old papa of a Decapod. He'd never blame her, he declared; it

was all his own fault—his and the Lehigh Valley's. He refused to take *all* the blame. The Lehigh Valley was never any place for a young man to start railroad-ing, especially if he was naturally loose and careless. He could curse the day he ever saw the Lehigh Valley, declared Decapod Duval.

But just the same he encouraged the Little Angel in her efforts to educate herself. Eventually he bought an encyclopedia in forty-nine volumes. In his kind-heartedness he erred disastrously. For the encyclopedia so engrossed the Little Angel that she began to neglect her housekeeping. She always severely blamed herself for her defection, as she was seven at the time she began this study and was entirely conscious of her responsibilities. In evading them at that time the alloy in her gold was first revealed.

The Little Angel was not through A before she was shamefully neglecting her housework. Decapod, however, never complained when she served him burned biscuits for supper because she had been so interested in Armenia she had forgotten to watch the oven. In spite of his looseness and carelessness, a better-hearted papa than Decapod Duval never lived. But of course he began to be freer and easier in his leisure hours now. By the time the Little Angel was through B he was performing among the redlights and the saloons as badly as he ever had in Buffalo. His Little Angel would get so absorbed in reading about Babylon or Berlin or Bermuda or Biology that she would forget to make the rounds of the saloons and bring him home. She never realized how Decapod was failing without her watchful care, and he never let on, for he felt it would not be right for her to neglect her education on his account; so, of course, at about the time the Little Angel had reached H Decapod was fired from the

Omaha yards. The Little Angel felt so badly under the shock of the disaster that she solemnly vowed she would never open an encyclopedia again. She had never broken her vow. So she had a first-rate education in everything that began with letters down to H; but from G on she knew no more than an infant.

The happy years, however, were not all gone. The light was to shine again.

IV

DECAPOD DUVAL also made a solemn vow. He would make his third move for reformation. He had heard that the third time is a charm. To him the saying became a consolation and a hope. This time!

He shipped to Pocatello, the booming junction and division point on the Oregon Short Line. Idaho was still a wild mining and cattle country at that time, and Decapod Duval showed little judgment in making his move, for Pocatello was the last place in the world for a golden-haired Little Angel whose education had gone no further than G. The Short Line had just connected with the O. R. & N., making a through line on to Portland, and Pocatello was roaring with life. Boomer railroaders, along with miners, cowboys and freighters, made the saloons and red lights multiply; here temptations faced Decapod Duval wherever he turned.

The Little Angel realized her papa's peril, but she gritted her little teeth, shook her golden curls, and strengthened her soul with the determination that Decapod should have the most watchful care of his life from now on. She forgot her own ambitions, and created a future for Decapod. His first job in Pocatello was firing a yard engine. She saw him being pro-

moted from the scoop to the throttle. Next he'd be put on a freight run, then on a passenger engine, and finally he'd pull the Limited. Thus the Little Angel put her own education and every other selfish consideration out of her mind and thought of nothing but the future of Decapod.

For a year all was happy and beautiful. Every night Decapod came home from the yards with his jeans, his blue flannel shirt and his handsome storm-cloud face sooty and greasy, but with his soul clean and his head sober, just as he used to be in Omaha before he bought her the encyclopedia. The Little Angel was certain that her prayers were being answered, her loving care rewarded.

Her housekeeping was perfection. Every night the lamp would be burning with a clean chimney in the window, the shiny coffee pot would be bubbling and steaming, filling the spick and span kitchen with caressing smells, the fried porkchops and potatoes would be browned to a turn in their plates on the red-and-white-checked table cloth, and the country gravy be puffing up bubbles and winking with black specks in its round brown bowl. The Little Angel always decorated the gravy. She had a pansy bed at her kitchen door and in the summertime she would stick a pansy in the gravy. Other times it would be a cherry blossom, or a rosebud, or a sunflower, and in the winter she would stick a sprig of sagebrush in the gravy. That desire of hers to decorate the gravy was the only evidence of childishness in her housekeeping.

Decapod Duval appreciated his Little Angel more than ever. When he came in he would first hang up his cap, then whiff the coffee smell, then look over the set table, and then he would pick up the Little Angel in

his strong hands, toss her to the ceiling, and laugh proudly.

"My Little Angel! Ain't she the housewife, though! The best old Decapod ever saw or wants to see!"

The happiest time of her day was when her supper was all on the table, and she had crawled up into her high chair, and was smiling with dignity and pride at Decapod. Then she always felt much older than Decapod, as though she were a large, fat aunt taking care of him, instead of his golden-haired daughter, the Little Angel.

"Oh, if it will only last!" she would sigh, as she washed the supper dishes.

It could not last, of course. Nothing so fine and lovely ever could.

V

ONE NIGHT Decapod came home singing. The Little Angel was frightened when she heard him, for heretofore he had never sung but when he was drunk. Her fears were soon allayed, however, for he tossed her to the ceiling and shouted the joyous news of his promotion to yard engineer. After supper he begged to be excused for awhile. He wanted, he said, to go tell Jerry the good news. He went out singing, and a long while passed without his return.

Hour after hour the Little Angel sat before the dying fire, watching the alarm clock. Midnight. Decapod was still gone. The Little Angel gritted her teeth and shook her curls, as she always did when she was determined, and went out into the snowy night to look for Decapod.

The Little Angel didn't know the Pocatello saloons,

as she'd never had to look through them yet for Decapod. So she went from one to the other, looking among all the men at the bars and around the poker and faro tables, braving all the scowling and curious stares of the miners, cowboys, freighters and boomers, but never finding Decapod. At last the Little Angel had searched all the saloons. She stood forlornly in the dark outdoors and wept, for she was weary and cold. A blizzard wind whirled sleety snow about her till her little teeth chattered. But she wouldn't give up—not yet!

Across the street a red light burned, the sleety white flakes flashing in its crimson rays. Its shaded windows sounded with laughter and song. The Little Angel crossed the street, mounted the steps, and rang the bell. A dark woman of foreign appearance answered the ring. The Little Angel knew her afterward as Jerry LeMoyne. She spoke kindly and appeared ashamed when she learned that the Little Angel was looking for her papa, Decapod Duval. *Oui*, he was in her house, snoring on a sofa in one corner of the parlor. He should be carried home. She, Jerry LeMoyne herself, would see to that. And so she did. Two switchmen carried Decapod through the blizzard night and put him to bed. The Little Angel watched over him faithfully and brought black coffee to him when he awoke at noon. His gaze avoided her blue eyes, though they did not reproach him. He said nothing, but he was the image of a despondent man. He dressed, and slouched away to the yards.

He not only lost his promotion, but his firing job was taken from him as well. The master mechanic put him to wiping and informed him he was lucky to be kept on any terms. Decapod listened meekly. His last hope was gone.

He accepted failure then and settled down to the life of an engine-wiper, living on the memory of his great young days on the Lehigh Valley, when he fired the first 2-10-wheeler on that famous line. Paydays he stood at the bar, or lolled at Jerry LeMoyne's, drank red liquor, and boasted of his past, until the Little Angel came to lead him home. The boomers, miners, cowboys and freighters soon learned to know and love her; and a hush always fell whenever she stepped into a saloon to look for Decapod. She created another effect at Jerry LeMoyne's; there the scarlet women would bow their heads and the tears would stream over their painted cheeks at the sight of the Little Angel's golden curls and blue eyes, while they remembered so sadly that they themselves had been as sweet and innocent one far time ago. The Little Angel was unconscious of the effect she created; she paid no heed to any one but Decapod.

So the Little Angel's life ran on in Pocatello till she was fifteen. Then it was decided that she had reached an age where it was not decorous and proper for her to go into saloons and Jerry LeMoyne's looking for Decapod. When she was three in Buffalo it was considered beautiful for her to enter the saloons and lead her father home; when she was five in Omaha she inspired reverence by such watchful care; and so had she at seven in Pocatello, and at twelve no objection was made. But now people were beginning to talk. The Little Angel had come to the age where she was filling out and should put up her golden curls; and it was generally considered that filled-out girls with put-up hair should not be allowed to rove through the saloons, even to look for their drunken fathers.

The Little Angel had to quit it, finally. That was the beginning of the end for Decapod Duval. The

Little Angel had to stay home and keep house according to her age, and so he caroused every payday, wasting his wages, without any care being taken of him at all. At last the Little Angel had to take in washing to keep the wolf from the door. Thus she developed a perilous friendship with Jerry LeMoyne. Madam Jerry not only gave her fine washing to do, but urged her to revive her ambitions. The Little Angel agreed and she took up her education from where she had dropped it at the age of seven. Jerry LeMoyne gave her French novels to read, and so she began to learn French.

The novels were mostly sentimental ones about the life of artists in Paris. The Little Angel had learned all about Art in the A volume of the encyclopedia, but the facts had been simply deadwood in her mind until the novels set them ablaze. She dreamed of Paris and the ateliers. Soon she was living so entirely in the dream that when she was bending over her washtub, in suds to her elbows, she would stop her scrubbing of shirtwaists and stockings and gaze for minutes at a time at the pictures of Parisian art life which her imagination wove in the steam. To her it was all imaginings and dreams. She did not dare to hope for the reality. Her common sense would not allow that. Common sense, however, is hardly a dependable monitor in this world of fortuitous events, in this life of romance, adventure and fatality.

Decapod Duval went to sleep in a roundhouse pit one night when he was drunk; and a mogul was wheeled over the pit and the grates pulled. Decapod Duval went up in smoke. . . .

VI

ALICE DUVAL halted her sad story here to order a third quart of champagne. The young hobo heaved a tremendous, mournful sigh, feeling that he had been holding his breath for hours. His melancholy was lightened by the golden glow of the champagne fumes that swam through his head. It was a glow of joy, yet he knew he was sorry. He had to be, for he was hearing a sad story. Hadn't he felt his eyes smart with tears whenever Alice Duval paused to fill their glasses? Hadn't his heart throbbed painfully when she went on, speaking with such beautiful sadness? Ah, if only there were some means by which he could save her when the sad story was told! If he were only rich! . . . He remembered. . . . He was Tony Gattalo, master of art, conqueror of men, protector of women, traveling in the disguise of a young hobo. . . . Ah, Alice Duval, beautiful and soulful unfortunate, little do you know! . . .

The story continued.

When it was found that hardly enough was left of Decapod Duval to sift from the mogul's clinkers and cart to the graveyard, a collection was taken up among the railroaders, the saloon men and the sporting women, for the Little Angel. She was given a thousand dollars and a pass to the Lehigh Valley, where a brother of Decapod's still lived. She resolved that she would never live near the sinful railroad that had started her father on the descent to ruin, but she would go where life was beautiful, happy and pure. In perfect innocence and faith she traveled directly from Pocatello to Paris, to become an artist's model, after the fashion of the heroines of her favorite novels.

For a long time her innocence was not threatened. It appeared that she was realizing the life of the novels. The painters and sculptors all fairly worshiped her, for by now she was blooming in her loveliest young beauty. They named her the Little Angel of the Ateliers. As her admirers increased, she learned that there were artists other than painters and sculptors. She met poets, dancers, singers, composers, architects, dramatists and novelists from all parts of the world but America. And the beautiful blue-eyed, golden-haired girl from Pocatello, Idaho, was the Little Angel of the Ateliers to most of them. All respected her innocence except the Russian composers and the English novelists. The brutal frankness of the former repelled her and she shunned them. It was her misfortune to disbelieve in the evil intentions of the latter. They artfully concealed the purpose which animated all English novelists in Paris in that period.

"Be warned, *ange d'or*," said M. France gravely at an artists' fête one night. "These Englishmen come to Paris only to study sex. There is no sex in England."

"What," asked the Little Angel curiously, "*is* sex?"

"Ah, if I could only describe it!" said M. France wistfully. "What fame!"

She laughed gayly. She liked M. France, though she never understood him.

The Little Angel won the solicitude of another Frenchman. M. de Gourmont visited an atelier where she was posing in the nude and presented her with an inscribed copy of *Physique de l'Amour*. He suggested that a careful perusal of its pages would put her on her guard against the snares of the English novelists—their polished manners, correct speech, pointed wit, distinguished bearing, suave demeanor, engaging frankness and superb tailoring. The Little Angel thanked

him graciously and continued in her pose, while M. de Gourmont restrained his admiration.

At that same moment a young English novelist was saying farewells to friends on a Dover wharf. They were expostulating.

"Why not an American lecture tour instead?" said his friends. "It is done now. It is no longer low."

"My mind is made up," he replied firmly. "I shall spend one night in Paris, get the material for a naturalistic novel, and return to the Kentish countryside to write it. I *must* study sex. I feel it as an imperative creative need. In England it is not done. So I shall go to Paris."

"You have been inflamed by the novels of Zola," protested one of his friends bitterly. "It is he who has fired you with this desire to drink life to the bitter dregs. Quench it by abandonment, my friend. Be English. Consider an American tour."

"No; I do not yield. To satisfy my creative need I must drink the bitter dregs, as well as the ruddy juice in the glass of life. It is only done in Paris. So I go. I do not yield."

"He is ruthless," said one friend to another.

"Yes," was the prophetic reply, "he is fated to go down in the history of our literature as a ruthless realist."

The young novelist overheard, but he cared nothing about going down in history. He had not the slightest premonition of setting an example that would be ardently followed by sophisticates from the Iowa cornfields and the Ohio cabbage country, as well as by young Englishmen and Colonials. He thought only of his creative need.

So he journeyed to Paris that afternoon, met the Little Angel of the Ateliers ere she had had the oppor-

tunity to peruse a single page of the *Physique de l'Amour*, ruined her that night, returned to the Kentish countryside the next morning, and wrote an eight-hundred-page novel about her.

That was her story.

VII

"MY LORD!" sighed the young hobo. "That ain't all?"

Alice Duval's blue eyes smiled over the rim of her tilted champagne glass. She slowly shook her blonde head as she set the empty glass on the tray.

"That is enough, however," she said. "After that, my dear, it was just one ruin after another." The animation died out of her voice. "Just one after the other. And here I am, my Cellini, as you said earlier in the night. It does spoil ever'-thing, doesn't it?"

The young hobo felt helpless as he watched her mood change. Her slender white fingers toyed with the stem of the champagne glass. The sparkle died from her eyes as she regarded her hand, and lines appeared as her face grew tense. Her eyelids drooped, and she raised her brows in the effort to open her eyes. Her head nodded downward, and the young hobo, entirely forgetting Tony Gattalo, master of art, conqueror of men, protector of women, felt a thrill of fear that she was going to collapse. But she recovered herself, and slowly gazed over the room, as though she were waking from a dream. When the young hobo met her gaze again he saw that her eyes had darkened in color, though their sparkle had returned.

"Li'sen, C'llini. There's more to tell." She leaned toward him and his heart pounded, though a nameless fear still pierced the golden glow in his head. "I'll tell

you this, C'llini, and we'll both laugh. We drink champagne to laugh, my dear. I'll tell you of Don Pindo. And we'll laugh. He barbs my heart with his cruel love, but we'll laugh. Oh!" Her voice shrilled suddenly. "He barbs my heart with his cruel love! He barbs my heart—"

"Stewed again, by God!" A swarthy hand reached between the two on the sofa and seized Alice Duval by the arm. "If I'm gone an hour—come with me now!"

"Take your dirty hands off me, Pindo!"

The young hobo was on his feet, swaying, a muddle of faces and figures waving under his eyes. A clear image emerged, the face of Alice Duval, distorted, her eyes staring wildly . . . a white arm jerked in the grip of a black paw . . . then he saw the flash of the silver buckles on her slippers, as she kicked . . . the table rose from the floor, toppled, and there was a loud smash of glass as its top struck the floor . . . a white arm raised a bottle . . . a scream—"I'll kill you, Pindo, you and that—" . . . and there she was, a crumpled black and white heap on the wine-red carpet. . . .

The young hobo sat on the sofa again, staring feverishly at the curtain through which the man who looked like a Mexican had carried Alice Duval. He stared at it until it stopped swaying so madly in front of him. Then he wiped the sweat from his forehead and looked around. The white-jacketed Chinaman was sweeping up the broken glass. The men and women at the tables were smoking and drinking again, talking and laughing over the show Alice Duval had made of herself . . . and of him, he guessed . . . there was that Imogene grinning at him like a fool. . . . That was how he

felt . . . Lord, she had looked so old all of a sudden . . . and it must have been a lie . . . it certainly must have been. . . .

VIII

THE YOUNG HOBO stood at the bar of the Quiet Place Saloon. His bundle lay by his right foot. He had blown the foam from a glass of beer. It was to be his last drink before leaving Pocatello. A Butte-bound freight was leaving in half an hour. He sipped his beer. For the first time in an hour he thought of words to express his feelings.

"By God, it's bitter!" he muttered. "By God, it's bitter."

"It is fer a fact," said a hoarse old voice in his ear, "but they ain't no better in town."

"What the hell you talkin' about?" growled the young hobo, swinging around.

"The beer. What the hell *you* talkin' about?"

"None of your—" The young hobo paused. The wrinkled face grinning at him probably belonged to an old-time railroader who knew local history. "The beer, too, I guess," said the young hobo mildly. "Come and have one."

For three beers he learned the true story of Alice Duval. Like most true stories, it failed to satisfy or inspire. The young hobo soon forgot it, but never forgot the story told him by Alice Duval.

The three beers brought back the glow to the young hobo's head. When the freight was clear of the Pocatello yards, he hung his legs out of the door of an empty box car, and again he dreamed in a darkness of stars. What golden imaginings were opened to him now! . . . There she was, so beautiful, but so piteous

and pale, as the English novelist leered over her, that golden-haired, blue-eyed Little Angel of the—what did she call it—of the Attelears! The swarthy hand of the English novelist grips her white arm, and the tears stream from her beautiful blue eyes, for she knows she is going to be ruined, for no one is near to answer her cry. . . . No one? Hark! The door crashes open and Tony Gattalo, master of art, conqueror of men, protector of women, stands on the threshold! The English novelist flings the Little Angel from him with a curse; she flies to the arms of Tony Gattalo, her hero artist, whose picture of her has already been bought by the Pope and hung in the Vatican. That is what he has come to tell her about. But the news must wait till later.

“Dog!” roars Tony Gattalo at the cowering English novelist. “I’m goin’ to beat you to a pulp for this! You dog!”

The battle rages on and on, for even an English novelist will fight when he is cornered. It is a desperate struggle before he is finally left, wounded and dying, on the floor of the attellear. Then Tony Gattalo takes the Little Angel in his arms.

“I have news for you, my love. The Pope has bought our picture for the Vatican. . . .”

“Ah, you are greater than Cellini!”

“Well, maybe I am.”

The Butte-bound train rolled on.

THREE BARTENDERS

I

THE German duke, the English lord and the Swedish professor were talking about poetry. What could be more beautiful than that! thought the tramp poet sadly. He was sad because he yearned to join the conversation and did not dare. For the duke, the lord and the professor were educated, refined and civilized men. They held mixed drinks gracefully in their hands and talked beautifully about poetry. Listening to their speech, the tramp poet felt like nothing but the commonest of hinds. So he was sad, though he had been reading and writing poetry for six months and knew a great deal about it. He was sad, also, because he was eighteen, in love, and going on a journey. The tramp poet did not object to this sadness in himself; he knew it was a necessity in the composition of poetry. He would still be sad, but he would be satisfied, nevertheless, if he could only join the talk of the German duke, the English lord and the Swedish professor. This was the first time the tramp poet had ever heard the speech of educated, refined and civilized men.

The tramp poet did appear a little out of place, dressed as he was in mackinaw and overalls. The scene was the smoking room of a steamship bound down the Coast for San Francisco. Shaded lights glowed softly among huge polished oak pillars, and over heavy oak tables, roomy leather chairs and a floor of black-and-white tile. The men playing cards, drinking and smok-

ing at the tables all appeared excessively well-dressed to the tramp poet. Feeling conspicuous, he had pressed himself into the remotest depths of a great chair. Even when his interest was caught by the three men at the table next to him, he only gazed sidewise at them. At first none of his face but the eyes showed above the bulge of his big mackinaw collar. As his interest increased in the duke, the lord and the professor, his head slowly emerged and pressed toward the group until he was resting his chin in the palm of his hand, which slanted out from the elbow resting on the thick arm of the leather chair.

The German duke was superb. He was wearing a blue serge coat so smooth yet unbinding on his shoulders it seemed to caress them. The duke's face was rosy and full. Under a round, pink chin was a wing collar. A diamond sparkled in a black necktie. Only a shadow of the duke's mouth was revealed under a mustache with spikes that turned up to flank a wide, stubby nose. Straw-colored hair bristled in a thick pompadour. He would have been a fierce-looking duke, had it not been for the tender glow of his pale-blue eyes as he talked about poetry.

The duke was the star of the group. The lord also talked ardently and at length, in unmistakable English. He was much younger than the duke, and quite handsome, with a devilish dancing light in his gray eyes and a mop of black, curly hair tumbling over them. The Swedish professor had little to say; he forked his hand, rested his chin in it, and hearkened.

Three educated, refined and civilized men, certainly! Sadly and yearningly the tramp poet in mackinaw and overalls drank in their talk. He learned that their names were Adolf, Alf and Carl. He knew, however, that they were a German duke, an English lord and a

Swedish professor, because he had read a grand story just a week ago about a French count, an English lord and an Italian professor traveling incognito through America. The story had made him imagine meeting three such educated, refined and civilized aristocrats sometimes. And here they were! The reality even more glorious than the imagining. For the tramp poet much preferred Germans and Swedes to French and Italians. If only he might join them! But the tramp poet knew too well that dukes, lords and professors did not talk to young working stiffs in mackinaws and overalls. He could only lean and long across the arm of his leather chair. He could never join that little group, the tramp poet reflected. . . . Ah, little did he think! When the English lord began to talk of Byron, when the John Collinses were brought forth in their tall glasses, when the liquor glowed, when the ice sparkled and the lemon peels smiled. . . .

II

THE tramp poet had begun this journey, leaving his love and his land behind, to search for the formless image of his desire. Here, so soon, the light of it was shining on his eyes. The sparkle of a star, the glow of a match—whatever it was, here was glory for the young tramp poet. Regard him for awhile, as he sits there in his rough clothes, yearning toward the three aristocrats, while a little of his story is told. . . .

The tramp poet discovered his talent by accident. It occurred the night he met Effie Sparks at a public dance in Astoria. Effie's mother was a Finn. Her father was an American real-estate dealer. She worked in her father's office, as stenographer and bookkeeper. The young strapper of a teamster was enchanted when

Effie smiled on him at the dance. Never before had he received favors from a girl who was not only a beautiful blonde, but a stenographer, a bookkeeper and a real-estate-dealer's daughter as well. He was in a dazzling daze as he danced with her, as he walked home with her, the moonlight shining upon them through maple leaves, as he kissed her good night. Returning to his boarding house, he thought over and over that her hair was like gold, her eyes were like stars. He could think of nothing else about Effie Sparks. Then the words turned into a song, beating measures through his head—

Her hair is like gold,
Her eyes are like stars.

The rhythm roused an unfamiliar impulse in him. It dimmed his memories of Effie in a search for words, for rhymes. The search produced only sounds. He went to sleep that night with one lone verse sounding in his ears, in this form:

Her hair is like gold,
Her eyes are like stars.
Te—tum—te—tum—told—
Te—tum—te—tum—tars.

Thus the young hobo teamster became a tramp poet. For weeks he wrestled with phrases and rhymes, attempting to put into poetry his ideas that Effie's cheeks were like roses, her hands like lilies, and her teeth like pearls. He was more successful with Effie than with the muse, but as his ardor for the former diminished his passion for the latter increased. He became a sad, tormented young man.

Then, one fine night he was soothing his soul with beer in the Combination Dancehall, and half-heartedly

attempting to catch the eye of a Spanish girl in a green dress. A huge, boozy sailor staggered up to his table and announced that he was the original Wolf Larsen. The curiosity of the tramp poet was aroused. He asked who Wolf Larsen was. The big sailor sneered at the ignorance the query revealed, and swung into a lecture on the great writers of sea stories. The tramp poet was bored, and his looks and thoughts again followed the Spanish girl in the green dress. They continued after her until he heard a rhyme bawled across the table. The sailor had taken a bulky book from the pocket of his storm coat and he was reading rousing passages from its pages. The lines shone and rang for the tramp poet. He forgot the Spanish girl. Here was the kind of poetry, living in the sailor's booming voice, that he had been wanting to write. Suddenly the sailor closed the poetry book, sprang from his chair and stood swaying, resting stiff arms and clenched fists on the table, his eyes blazing through a tangled fringe of black hair. The tramp poet followed his look. Two fishermen were fighting over the Spanish girl in green. The sailor swore, and rolled toward them, bawling that he was the original Wolf Larsen, and threshing the air with his fists. In half a minute twenty men were fighting over the dance-hall floor, swinging fists and feet, smashing tables and chairs. The tramp poet kept his safe place at the corner table until the fight had surged out into the street. Then he noticed that some one was crouching behind him. He turned and looked into the face of the Spanish girl. Her eyes were wide with fright, lovely, dark. The tramp poet saw them still as he slipped out the back way. He hardly knew that he held the sailor's poetry book in his hand. But before he went to sleep that night he had read half of *Don Juan*. Now he was truly a poet. Byronic.

Going to sleep to the singing of lines about Spanish love. Seeing the frightened, dark, lovely eyes of a Spanish girl.

This is not a love story. Little more needs to be said about either Effie Sparks or the Spanish girl. From them sprang a poet's first poetic visions and raptures. Let us leave them now and stand with the tramp poet on a steamship ready to leave the Astoria docks.

He was sad, for he was a poet leaving his love and his land. He remembered his boyhood in the sagebrush country of the Northwest, the roving and toil of his later years. A hard and bitter life, but he regarded it with a poetic melancholy now. His loves—the reproaches of Effie Sparks were still keen to his ears; the kisses of the Spanish girl warmed his lips, even now. All that must be regarded with a Byronic melancholy. Lines . . . Where once I roved, a happy child . . . roll on, thou desert hills of sagebrush, roll! . . . on yonder foam-striped strand . . . strange, dark-eyed and pale . . . on with the dance . . . and wilt thou e'er forget . . . ah, the star of my hope has declined.

. . . But a poet should not only lament the past. Here a quest for glory was begun; something rapturous and proud should be sung for the start of the journey. Romantic California was ahead, or,—who could tell?—a wreck, and a Haydee discovered on some enchanted isle. . . .

The sunset red and gold turned dark over the sky, lights began to glow dimly in the town, and the timbered hills above the river appeared cool and black. The steamship's whistle roared. Departure was near. It was a poetic hour. The tramp poet thought hard, then he rallied his forces for the first stanza of a poem of farewell:

I stand on the deck at sundown;
The captain rings a bell;
The engines beat beneath my feet—
My love, my land, farewell!

The poet thrilled. So far, splendid! "Regret," he decided, was the word to make noble ending for the second stanza. Again he raised his sword and led a charge.

A deckhand, he rolls up a rope,
While I roll a cigarette.

That attempt ended in a distinct repulse. The lines, after being repeated a few times, certainly sounded flat and dull. But the poet clung stubbornly to his position. "Regret" should be the last word. Surely there were more poetic words than "bet," "wet," "sweat," "debt," and "pet" to rhyme with it. He was wrestling with "forget" when the whistle sounded again and the steamship drifted away from the dock. The creative impulse was stifled by the emotion of departure. The tramp poet could only repeat his first stanza over and over as he stood by the rail and watched distance and the dark slowly blot out the lights of Astoria. . . . The ship started swaying, swung down and up, like a giant hammock. The tramp poet could see nothing but the white splashes of the great rollers of the Columbia River bar. Poetry entirely subsided. The life ahead lost its mask of romance. Its aspect was threatening and dark. The tramp poet remembered that he was a teamster in mackinaw and overalls. He had to live by hard labor. That wherever he might go. What would a great, strange city offer him? What could it want with him? He was leaving his home land, leaving a girl who looked at him with love in her large, dark eyes. Poetry had done this to

him, made him dream and perform like a fool. He sighed for consolation. It occurred to him that he might feel better after a cigarette and a bottle of beer. He tramped down the deck toward the smoking room. There he discovered the actuality of poetry and romance, in talk around a table, in appreciative souls, in the glow of a lovely liquor, the sparkle of ice, and the smile of a lemon peel.

III

LET US return to the first picture. The tramp poet in mackinaw and overalls, unconsciously edging his chair toward the table of the German duke, the English lord and the Swedish professor. The three aristocrats pausing in their conversation on poetry to argue mildly concerning mixed drinks. They agreed that the steward did not know how to mix a John Collins. The duke then voiced a preference for Knickerbeins and offered to mix some himself for the next round. The professor spoke a few words in favor of the Morning Glory Fizz. The English lord insisted that a John Collins was the king of all drinks aboard ship; he would show the steward how to mix the next round and prove his point.

The tramp poet enjoyed this mild diversion from the main topic. The three were aristocratic even in their drinking. They lifted the tall John Collins glasses with sureness and grace, they sipped the pale, glowing liquor slowly, and the talk ran smoothly on.

The duke quoted a verse in German. His voice shook with feeling. Then he began to extol the name of Heine, one unfamiliar to the tramp poet. The duke's voice sank to the soft, low tone of sentiment. A girl named Freda had taught him to love Heine. That

was in a Bavarian beer garden, long ago. *Ja*, Heine was the greatest of all the lyric poets, excepting Goethe, whose moral tone was so noble and grand. And one must not forget Schiller, whose "Ode to Joy" was by the godlike Beethoven used.

"*Ach*, Freda!" sighed the duke, wiping his eyes.

The English lord had been listening, with his head leaned against the back of his chair, his eyes half-closed, and a superior smile slightly curving his mouth. He spoke, remarking that he had little respect for the literary opinions of a man who allowed them to be influenced by the female company he kept. He had never permitted that himself. Once he had a girl who had a pure passion for the verses of Tennyson. She detested Byron because the noble lord didn't cherish the proper respect for women. Had he let his emotion for this girl influence his literary opinions? Rather not.

"I told her," said the English lord, "that Lord Byron was a flower of English genius matched only by the flaming rose of Shakespeare. She left me without a farewell. I have never seen her since." He drained his glass, gazed sadly into its depths for a moment, sighed, then looked scornfully at the duke. "As for Heine—pooh! Too moony. Does a great poet snatch a mere kiss from a girl and then moon over her as a frightened bird? Regard Lord Byron. He thought, lived and died as a hero. He was one in spirit with Casanova and Cellini. Let the girls have their sentimental say over poets like Heine and Shelley. But a self-respecting man can't take seduction so seriously as to allow it to influence his literary opinions."

The tramp poet stared with pity at the duke. He would not have been surprised if the man had sunk to the floor in shame. But the duke was imperturbable. He said, gently, that he was happy to see that his

friend had come to his senses at last and admitted that Goethe was greater than Shakespeare. The English lord indignantly retorted that he hadn't done any such damn' thing. The duke responded, gently still, that if one was to judge a poet's work by the number of women he had seduced, Goethe, according to history, surpassed Shakespeare by fifty to two. The lord looked hurt at that and said that everybody was always misunderstanding him. He was not arguing about the relative merits of poets, but on the influence of love on literary judgments. Shakespeare certainly hadn't been influenced in this respect; regard Cleopatra, the realest woman in literature; then regard Goethe's Marguerite, a sentimentalized innocent at the mercy of the devil and wicked men; and was it a passion for reality or sentiment for women that produced the moralizing about the eternal feminine leading us upward and on? Byron's diary, now—

"*Was für ein verdammtes Land ist das?*" growled the duke. "Who can poetry disguss with an Englishman?"

The professor announced that he had a few words to add to the general confusion. He had been thinking of Ibsen. When Ibsen was young and a master of himself among women he had portrayed women truly in *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*; but when he was older, and consequently more sentimental, he portrayed women as persecuted slaves.

The tramp poet was exalted and inspired by the realization that at last he was listening to three educated, refined, and civilized aristocrats conversing in a style that excelled his grandest dreams. They spoke about great books and famous authors as carelessly as a teamster would speak about his horses; they addressed themselves to affairs of art as familiarly as a

cowboy would address his steers. They argued the fine points of what was literature with the off-hand assurance of loggers discussing the fine points of felling big trees. The tramp poet was exalted and inspired, but his sadness increased. He was outside the gates. Inside the portals and the walls were lights and banners, songs and wine, the laughter of girls, the twanging of musical strings, the seductive dance. The tramp poet stood alone, a figure in mackinaw and overalls, a figure with a lonely dream and a lonely desire. It was the most poignant hour of his life.

IV

THE gates were to open for him, however. His memory was the key. Fortunately for the tramp poet, the English lord, in attempting to recall some Byronic lines, was stuck at the end of the first line of the first stanza. He paused, frowned, and there was silence around the table, a silence that was broken by the voice of the tramp poet. The lines gushed from his mouth as the spring gushed from the rock struck by the staff of Moses. His eyes flashed and his face shone like a rose. His moist hair tumbled over his forehead; in his exaltation he had the feeling that his locks draped a brow as noble as Byron's, and it seemed that his voice was sounding from a golden horn:

"The isles of Greece, the isles of Greece,
Where burning Sapho lived and sung!"

They were listening, too, those three educated, refined and civilized aristocrats! All three leaned toward the tramp poet, their right hands half-closed around their glasses of John Collins. . . .

"The mountains look on Marathon,
And Marathon looks on the sea. . . ."

On and on. Ah, the grand and lordly time! The tramp poet's voice was a thunder of music as he cried, "Dash down yon bowl of Samian wine!" It was heavy and dark with lamentation in the stanza on the Greek girls whose glorious black eyes shone, and this cry was uttered as Byron's own:

"To think such breasts should suckle slaves!"

"Beautiful, by God!" exclaimed the German duke, wiping his eyes.

"Byron!" It was a soft exclamation from the English lord. "There was never a better poet for a man who is young, drunk, in love, and going on a journey."

The Swedish professor nodded and smiled.

"But I am not drunk," said the tramp poet wistfully.

The English lord at once announced that he would immediately mix *four* John Collinses. In half an hour the tramp poet was calling the three aristocrats by their first names—Adolf, Alf and Carl.

V

BEAUTIFULLY, angelically drunk. And the end was not yet. A glass was shoved into the tramp poet's hand. Pale liquor glowed under his eyes, ice sparkled, and a lemon peel smiled. A keen, cool smell wafted up his nose. He lifted his glass. A slow, cold stream spread over his tongue. It poured down his throat. There it all was again—the fine, fresh flavors inside his mouth, the pleasant cool prickling down his throat, the warm, comfortable glow in his stomach, the rosy haze over his eyes, the delicious swim of heat in his head. Poetry

ideas bubbled anew and poetry words bloomed afresh.

But the tramp poet was not in a mood to speak them now. He was content with leaning back in his chair, watching how gloriously hazy-mellow the drift of light and smoke in the big room had become, gazing on the refined, intelligent faces of his three new friends, not trying to make much sense from their speech, simply reveling in it because it was so civilized. The tramp poet was happy to listen now, also, because the conversation had turned to life in San Francisco. It awakened delightful dreams.

All three aristocrats appeared to be familiar with every café, saloon, theater and dance hall in the city. They talked as though they had lived in San Francisco all their years. One minute Alf, the English lord, was telling about the meals he had eaten and the wines he had drunk in twenty different Italian and French restaurants, the next minute Carl, the Swedish professor, was speaking calmly about burlesque and vaudeville in the Barbary Coast dance halls, the singers and dancers in cafés such as the Black Cat, the theaters where one night drink, smoke, and make love to a girl as one watched the show, and the marvelous Market Street theaters where New York shows and society crowds were on view. Then Adolf, the German duke, held forth on the "lofely moosic" which San Francisco had for one's enchantment—the concerts where a man with a soul could listen with a Hedwig, a Clara, a Gertrude, or a Johanna and be lifted to sublimity by the music of Beethoven or Schubert or Haydn. Music, beer and love! *Ach*, San Francisco! Sometimes it was beautiful as Munich!

Ah, San Francisco! There in the steamship smoking room the drunken praises of three of her adorers wrought for the young tramp poet a vision of a raptur-

ous, golden city he could never lose. A poet, young, drunk, in love, and going on a journey. Leaving his love and his land for an impulse, the impulse toward a vague desire. What an adventure now! So beautifully, angelically drunk! Such an hour is the generosity of life.

Every light in the smoking room was glowing then like a rose in the morning sunshine, the other people and tables around were dim in a mellow, golden mist, and the tramp poet's chair was a sunny cloud. He could shut his eyes and imagine drowsily that he was floating over fields of flowers, with birds singing about him, and the bluest sky overhead. . . . But it was Lord Alfred singing . . . some sailor's song. The tramp poet blinked his eyes blissfully, smiled rosy, picked up a John Collins glass, winked at the smiling lemon peel, lapped his lips over the rim of the glass, let the cold liquor tingle and spread through his mouth and down his throat, sighed deeper into his chair as his stomach glowed and the beautiful feelings bubbled so sweetly and drowsily in his head. Pretty soon, he thought, he would sing a little song. . . .

The tramp poet knew now why he was going to San Francisco. The gay crowds. The bright pleasures. Theaters. Music. Life had been bitter and hard. A bitter life in the desert sagebrush hills. Hard, hard labor on the ranches, in the camps. He was leaving his land without regret. His love—well, he would always think kindly of his love, as he reveled among the poetic delights of San Francisco. As he reveled there, with his three new friends—his three new friends—a clear, sober thought hauled the tramp poet up. That San Francisco life was for them because they were educated, refined, civilized aristocrats. They tolerated him now, a laborer in mackinaw and overalls, because he

could spout Byron, and, being drunk, they enjoyed hearing Byron. In the morning, when they were sober, they would freeze him out. To-morrow he would be a plain laborer again, and that he would be in San Francisco. There he would have to take a common teaming job, perform with other laborers around the beer and redeye joints and in the cribs—but to hell with that! Now was the golden time! Now life was kind, lavish even. As long as it gave, he would receive. . . .

The tramp poet gulped down the cool, flavorish fire of a John Collins and looked for a chance to join in the conversation. He was astonished to see that the duke's head was sagging over the table, the tall glass wabbling in his hand. Tears were dropping from his cheeks into the liquor. The tramp poet was touched. He laid his arm over the duke's shoulder.

"What's the matter, old-timer?" he said.

"*Ach*, mine life!" sobbed the duke, entirely wilting under sympathy. "It a waste, a desert iss—a roon!"

"Well, hell!" the tramp poet exclaimed. "How can that be, Adolf?"

"My life degraded iss," the duke insisted, his voice thick with tears. "When I trink and off moosic sbeak somedimes my sorrow overwhelmss."

The tramp poet attempted to console his friend with facts. When we were drunk, he said, we always imagined that things were either better or worse than they actually were, so we should think only of the good things of life when we were drinking.

"Always forget trouble when you lift the glass," advised the tramp poet.

"Nefer can I forget it!" cried the duke. "Nefer! Would you belief what it iss? Efer since I was a boy in Munich I haf wanted to play the flute in a big orchestra. You will laugh, you who are young and a boet.

For you that iss well. You a talent haf. For me, I haf looked no higher than flute-playing—*ach!* what a beautiful life it would be—playing the moosic of Haydn and Handel, of Mozart and Beethoven, so many girls hafing! But now—” Again the duke’s voice was choked with emotion—“to haf only the talent to mix Knickerbeins and Bismarcks, to be only a bartender—”

“A *bartender!*” The tramp poet yelled the word. “You don’t mean to say that *you* are a bartender?”

The English lord answered him, growling across the table:

“Sure he’s a bartender. We’re all bartenders. Been taking a vacation up here in the woods. What’s the matter with bartenders, I’d like to know?”

“Well, hell!”

The tramp poet could say no more.

VI

TWO HOURS later a cabin door closed between the tramp poet and his three bartender friends. He stood on the deck outside for a minute, listening to Adolf and Carl as they tried to hush Alf’s singing:

“A RO-ving, a RO-ving! Since ro-ving’s been my roo-in,
I’ll go no more a ro-ving with you, fair maid!”

The tramp poet yearned to join Alf in bawling out the chorus. But he did not dare. Bawling such songs was why the steward had chased the quartet out of the smoking room.

“I’ll go no more a ro-HO—”

A grunt and a struggle sounded from behind the cabin door. Then Adolf’s voice, boozy and thick:

"Gimme towel, Carl. Gag'm towel shuttup."

The tramp poet staggered on along the deck. A confusion of thoughts and feelings were swimming slowly and heavily in his head.

. . . Well, hell. Had to find own cabin now. Here she was—27. Had to roll in. Sleepy. Like to ser'nade beautiful new bartender friends. But they might gag *me* with a towel. Poor li'l Lord Alf, gagged with a towel. They'd never gag this li'l poet with a towel. Nossir. Had to roll in. Sleepy. 27. . . .

Wish damn' ship'd stan' still. Wanna fin' keyhole. Wearin' 'self out tryin' fin' keyhole. Res' minute. Cool off. Wind slappin' off black water, slappin' down deck. Mus'n' get sheashick. Goin' make poem. Lessee. Goin' have won'erful idea. Somethin' 'bout life. Life is won'erful. Tha's it. Yessir, life is won'erful. Why is life won'erful? 'Cause common teamster can meet up on Sa' Frisco steamer with three ej'cated, refine' civ'liz' bartenders and have one hell of beautiful, angelic time. John Collinses make life won'erful. That was idea. Ev'body have plenty John Collinses ev'body be ej'cated, refine', civilize'. . . .

Good by, ol' Nor'west country, back over black, slappin' water. Farewell, love and land . . . good ol' country—wheat fields, sagebrush desert, canyons, rivers, cattle ranges, sheep trails, mountain roads, headframes, mine dumps, timberlands. . . . All won'erful people—ranchers, religious women, sheep-herders, cowboys, teamsters, rivermen, crop hands, freighters, railroaders, miners, gandy-dancers, longshoremen, loggers, fishermen, sawdust savages, saloon-keepers, gamblers, bartenders, sportin' women, old characters, stories, girls, yessir . . . Effie . . . a Spanish girl in green, with eyes so lovely, so dark . . . feel like cryin' . . . somehow so Go' damn' sad. . . .

Mus' acshuly be drunk. Got to say farewell to love
and land now. Good-by, ol' Nor'west country, back
over black water. Sleepy. Got to roll in. Here's to you,
old-timer. . . . G'night. . . .

THE TYPE

in which this book has been set (on the Linotype) is based on the design of William Caslon (1692-1766). In his work the old-style letter was brought to its highest perfection, and though modifications have been introduced to meet changing printing conditions, the basic design of the Caslon letters has never been improved. In this modern adaptation of the original Caslon, the principle difference to be noted is a slight shortening of the ascending and descending letters to accommodate a larger face on a given body-size.



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192



